# SELECT

# PRACTICAL WRITINGS

OF

# ROBERT TRAILL.

ISSUED BY THE COMMITTEE OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE WORKS OF
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# CONTENTS.

# TRAILL AND HIS WRITINGS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE family of the TRAILLS is one of considerable antiquity, and was at an early period possessed of the estate of Blebo, in Fifeshire. The first historical notice we find of them is in Keith's Catalogue of Scottish Bishops, wherein it is stated, that Walter Traill, who was raised to the metropolitan see of St Andrew's by King Robert III. about the year 1385, was a son of the Laird of Blebo. Andrew Traill, the great-grandfather of the writer of these Sermons, was a younger brother of the then proprietor: he embraced the profession of arms, and served with distinction as a colonel in the wars of the Netherlands against Spain, and afterwards under the young King of Navarre, better known as Henry IV. of France.

Robert Traill, the grandson of the preceding, and father of the subject of our memoir, is well known in the history of those who, during the 17th century, were sufferers for the truth in Scotland. He was minister of Elie in Fife, and afterwards of the Greyfriars' Church in Edinburgh,—a situation that connected him with the public events, and involved him in the disastrous calamities, of that stirring period. After witnessing the miseries inflicted by the Marquis of Montrose upon his country, he was one

of the ministers who attended that noble to the scaffold. On the invasion of Cromwell, and the approach of the English army to Edinburgh, he took refuge in the Castle, with those who refused to submit to the victorious general, and in the siege that followed he was severely wounded. At the Restoration, and when the whole land was maddened with a blind fit of loyalty, his deepest thought was for the safety of the Church of Scotland; and with other nine ministers, he drew up a declaration to the king, in which, after congratulating his Majesty's return, and professing their loyalty and submissiveness, they ventured modestly to remind him of his promises and engagements in behalf of the national church when he was crowned at Scoon. But for this, Traill was imprisoned with his brethren, in the Castle, for the space of seven months. Even when liberated, he was narrowly watched by the prelates; and having ventured to expound the scriptures to a few friends in the house where he dwelt, he was accused of holding a conventicle, and summoned before the Council. His sentence was banishment for life; and in 1663, when more than sixty years old, he was obliged to bid a mournful farewell to his home and family, and retire to Holland. Such is but a brief outline of his labours and sufferings. It does not appear that he published any work; but his two letters written to his wife and children during his exile, and which have been repeatedly printed, have been always deservedly admired by the Christian public for their apostolic simplicity, their tenderness and piety.

Robert Traill, his son, and the subject of this brief notice, was born at Elie, in May 1642. After he had passed through the usual preparatory studies, he was

sent to the College of Edinburgh, where he distinguished himself in the several classes, and was much commended by the professors for his industry and acquirements. As he had devoted his life to the work of the ministry, he applied himself for several sessions to the study of theology; and his heartiness to the cause of the church of his fathers, which he ever afterwards so nobly defended, was shewn by his fearless attendance upon Mr James Guthrie of Stirling to the scaffold. But his own personal troubles soon followed. His father's banishment had so straitened the circumstances of the family, that they were often without a home; and in 1666, in consequence of some copies of the Apologetic Relation, a work which the prelates hated, and the Privy Council had condemned to the flames, having been found in their dwelling, he was obliged, with his mother and brother, to hurry into concealment. The oppressions of the prelatists produced their natural results: a portion of the people prematurely rose in arms, and after great suffering, were routed at Pentland Hills by the king's forces. Robert Traill, it was asserted, had been in arms with the insurgents; and in consequence of this report, whether true or unfounded, he was obliged to fly to Holland to his father in 1667. In this shelter of persecuted Presbyterianism, he continued his studies in theology, and assisted Nethenus, Professor of Divinity at Utrecht, in publishing Rutherford's Examination of Arminianism. But his stay in Holland could not have been long, for we find him in London preaching in April 22. 1669, upon the Thursday previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper. It is probable, that in the earlier part of the same year he had come to London, and been

ordained to the work of the ministry by the Presbyterian clergymen in the metropolis. From the notices in his manuscript sermons it also appears, that after preaching some time in London without any settled charge, he was permanently stationed at Cranbrook, a small town in Kent.

In the year 1677, Traill was in Edinburgh, probably upon a temporary visit to his native country and friends; and, as he was a faithful workman in his sacred calling, both in season and out of season, he privately preached in the Scottish capital, notwithstanding the very stringent laws in force against such religious meetings. He was soon apprehended and arraigned before the Privy Council, as a holder of house-conventicles. He acknowledged this part of the charge. He was asked, if he had also preached at field-conventicles, but this question he very properly refused to answer. It would have been to confess a capital offence, and pronounce his own death-sentence. He was ordered by the judges to purge himself by oath of having either preached or attended at such meetings, but with this he also refused to comply. All that he would acknowledge amounted to this, that he had received Presbyterian ordination in London, and that he had conversed with Mr John Welch on the English border. Upon these slender grounds he was sentenced to imprisonment in the Bass; and in this loathsome dungeon he found Frazer of Brea, Alexander Peden, and other distinguished captives, who were suffering in the same good cause for which he was sent thither. His confinement, however, lasted only three months, at the end of which he was released by an order from Government. On being liberated he returned to his little flock at Cranbrook,

and, after some time, removed to London, where he officiated to the close of his life as pastor of a Presbyterian congregation. After outliving the persecution of the Stuarts, and witnessing their downfal and the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty on the British throne, he died in May 1716, at the age of seventy-four.

Considering the long life of this eminent divine, and his talents as a writer, both in doctrinal and practical divinity, it is to be regretted that his published works are comparatively so few. Indeed, it would appear from the evidences of his MSS., that his ministerial labours were so highly appreciated, and the demands upon them so incessant, that he had little leisure for authorship. Even his admirable series of discourses on the Throne of Grace, had to be transcribed from the copies of two short-hand writers of his congregation, his own consisting only of a few notes and texts, which he had amplified extemporaneously in the pulpit. Such, too, was his modesty, that his first publication did not appear until he had attained the mature age of forty; and even then, as he quaintly informs us, it was "extorted" from him; and the second did not follow till after ten long years, while both productions comprise but a few pages. The works which he published during his lifetime were a sermon, How Ministers may best win souls; a Letter on Antinomianism; thirteen discourses on the Throne of Grace, from Heb. iv. 16; and sixteen sermons on the prayer of our Saviour in John xvii. 24. These were so favourably received, and so useful, that, after his death, the following works were published from his manuscripts: Stedfast Adherence to the Profession of our Faith, in

twenty-one sermons on Hebrews x. 23; another series, consisting of eleven sermons, on 1 Peter i. 1–4; and six sermons on Galatians ii. 21.

Of the value of Traill's writings it would now be superfluous to speak; that has been equally confirmed by his cotemporaries, and by each succeeding generation. It is also worthy of remark, that this high estimation has not been confined to any particular church or party, strong though his Presbyterian principles were, and unflinchingly though they were avowed and advocated. All Christians have united here in acknowledging the presence of Christian excellence. They have recognised the vigour of his intellect, the conclusiveness of his reasoning, the clearness of his ideas, and the pure, simple, and nervous style in which they are embodied; and, better still,—they have appreciated the zeal, the sincerity, and fervent piety with which his writings are pervaded.

It was the original design of the Committee of the Cheap Publication Society, that this volume should wholly consist of selections from Traill's sermons already published. But in consequence of a suggestion in the memoirs which have been written of him, that many of his writings, still unpublished, might be in the possession of his descendants, an application on the subject was made to them; and the promptitude and kindness with which it was met and answered, cannot be too gratefully felt or warmly acknowledged. The time-honoured MSS. of their distinguished ancestor,—those heir-looms so highly prized by a family, and often so selfishly withheld, or so grudgingly given to the world,—were immediately forwarded, and frankly placed at the discretion of the Committee. In this way they have to

acknowledge a volume from the Rev. David Trail, D.D. Panbride, containing a copy in writing of Traill's Letter to his Children; a volume of sermons in MS. from Robert Trail, Esq., Montrose, and also some valuable biographical notices of the author, of which we have availed ourselves in this brief sketch; and another volume from William Trail, Esq., Ballylough, Ireland. From these a rich selection, not of entire sermons, but of subjects and paragraphs, could have been made, which would have formed a valuable appendix to our publication. But a fourth volume, in the possession of Anthony Trail, Esq., W.S., Edinburgh, and which he placed in the kindest manner at our disposal, has enabled us to give, not mere extracts, but entire and finished sermons. This MS. collection, to which we at present refer, contains the first sermons which Traill preached in London, and which he wrote at length, and with great care, intending probably to continue this practice, until the frequent demands upon his increasing usefulness and popularity, and his facility as an extemporaneous speaker, soon obliged him to satisfy himself with copious notes and illustrations. From this valuable source have been extracted the sermon on Hebrews xii. 29; that on Isaiah lxiii. 16; the three sermons on Matthew vii. 13, 14; the sermon on Ephesians iii. 8; that on Philippians ii. 12, 13; on Corinthians ii. 10; and two sermons on Hebrews vi. 4, 5, 6,—in all, ten discourses, constituting nearly the half (and, we trust, not the least acceptable part) of the present work, and which are now for the first time given to the world.

While we thus express our gratitude to those by whom our publication has been so signally benefited,

we earnestly appeal to others to follow such a generous example. Sure we are, that all the rich, and as yet unpublished relics of the Reforming and Covenanting periods, are not exclusively buried in the catacombs of college libraries, or imprisoned in the cabinets of antiquarianism; but that much that is valuable, and calculated to benefit and bless the world, in the form of MSS. written by the illustrious of former days, is still in the possession of many, and the publication of which might throw light and lustre upon the history of our national church, and the individual piety of former days. And we make this appeal to their kindness the more fearlessly, that our Society exists for no selfish, or merely party purposes. Alas! the question is not now about any particular dogma: it is Presbyterianism, nay it is Protestantism itself which is about to be summoned to the life-and-death struggle, and all who love the truth must unite, and defend it at whatever sacrifice. And how can those serpent-superstitions of former ages that have crept into the light of day, and swollen into such portentous bulk, be more fitly encountered, than by the same weapons, and by the very men under whose giant tread they writhed, and were all but exterminated? We trust that we do not look to the sepulchres of our fathers in vain; and that, though dead, they shall thus yet speak, and animate with a trumpet-voice the hearts of their children, who may be about to inherit their conflict, as they have inherited their names.

# WRITINGS OF ROBERT TRAILL.

## SIX SERMONS

FROM

GALATIANS II. 21.

## SERMON I.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—GAL. ii. 21.

THE scope of the apostle Paul in this epistle, is to reprove the church that he writes to, for a great and sudden apostacy from that faith of the gospel that they were planted in. The apostle Paul himself was one of the main planters amongst them; and quickly after his removal from them false brethren crept in amongst them, and perverted them from the simplicity that was in Christ: their great error lay here, in mixing the works of the law with the righteousness of Christ, in the grand point of the justification of a sinner before God. Throughout this epistle the apostle argues strongly against this error: they had not renounced the doctrine of Christ; they did not deny justification by faith in him; but they thought

that the works of the law were to be added to their faith in Christ, in order to their justification.

I shall only take notice briefly of a few of his arguments against this error, as they lie in the context, to lead you to the words that I have read, and mean to speak to.

The former part of the chapter is historical, telling them what he had done, and what had befallen him some years ago; how he was entertained and received by the great servants of Christ at Jerusalem, Peter, James, and John, that seemed to be pillars, and were indeed so: see the first ten verses. The next thing that he breaks forth into, in point of arguing with them, is upon the account of Peter's dissimulation, and Paul's reproof of him. The point seemed to be very small: Peter had made use of his Christian liberty in free converse with the believing Gentiles; but when some of the brethren of the Jews came from Jerusalem, he withdrew himself, and separated from them, fearing them of the circumcision; fearing that they would take it ill: a weak kind of fear it was, and upon this small thing the apostle set himself against him with great zeal. "I withstood him," saith he, "to the face, because he was to be blamed," (ver. 11). By this withdrawing the use of his Christian liberty, he hardened the Jews, and he weakened the hands of the weaker Jewish converts, that thought the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles was not yet taken away.

1*st*, His first argument against mingling the works of the law with faith in justification, is taken from the practice of the believing Jews. What way did they take to be justified? "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that

a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," (ver. 15, 16).

*2dly*, His next argument is taken from the bad effect and sad consequence of seeking righteousness by the law, (ver. 17), which, because it is something dark, I would explain it a little in a few words: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." "If so be we that have sought righteousness in Jesus Christ, if we have yet any dealings with the law in point of righteousness, we are found sinners still; and if a justified man be found a sinner, why then Jesus Christ, instead of delivering us from the bondage of the law, is found a minister of sin."

*3dly*, His third argument is yet strongest of all, and some way the darkest, (ver. 20), "For I through the law am dead unto the law, that I might live unto God." As if he should have said, "For my part, all the use that I got of the law, the more I was acquainted with it, it slew me the more, and I died the more to it, that I might live to God; all that the law can do to me in point of justification, is only to condemn me, and it can do no more." And whensoever the law enters into a man's conscience it always doth this; "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died: the commandment slew me," (Rom. vii. 9, 11).

*4thly*, His next argument is taken from the nature of the new life that he led, (ver. 20), "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but

Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Words of extraordinary form, but of more extraordinary matter: words that one would think seem to be some way cross to one another: but yet they set forth gloriously that gracious life that through Christ Jesus is imparted to justified believers. "Christ died for me, and I am crucified with Christ; and yet I live, but it is Christ that lives in me, and Christ lives in me only by faith."

My text contains two arguments more, drawn from a common natural head of arguing against error, by the absurdities that necessarily flow from it; and they are two the greatest that can be, "Frustrating the grace of God,"—and "making the death of Christ to be in vain." And greater sins are not to be committed by men: the greater sin, the unpardonable sin, is expressed in words very like to this, (Heb. x. 29): "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God: and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" And how near to one another are frustrating the grace of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace, and making Christ's death to be in vain, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing!

There are two words to be explained before we go any further: 1*st*, What is the grace of God? 2*dly*, What is it to frustrate the grace of God?

*First*, What is the grace of God? The grace of God hath two common noted acceptations in the scripture.

1. It is taken and used in the scripture for the doctrine of the grace of God, and so it is frequently used; the gospel itself is called the grace of God, (Tit. ii. 11): "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men:" that is, the gospel; for it is the teaching grace of God that is there spoken of, called by the apostle "the gospel of his grace." And this grace of God may be received in vain. Many may have this grace of God and go to hell. Pray that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2. By the grace of God in the word is understood the blessing itself; and this is never frustrated: that grace that called Paul, that grace that wrought mightily with him, that was not given him in vain: "The grace that was bestowed was not in vain, for I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." The gospel of the grace of God is frequently frustrated, but the grace itself is never so.

*Secondly*, What is it to frustrate this grace of God? The word that I remember in the original is used, (Mark vii. 9): "Ye make void (or reject) the commandments of God." It is the same word with that in my text: to frustrate the grace of God, is to defeat it of its end, to miss the end of it. Luke vii. 30, it is said the Pharisees and Lawyers frustrated the grace of God against themselves; or, as we read it there, "they rejected the counsel of God against themselves." The true grace of God itself can never be frustrated; it always reaches its end, for it is almighty: but the doctrine of the grace of God is many times rejected; and the apostle here in the text speaks of it as a sin that they are guilty of that speak of right-

eousness by the works of the law. There is one thing that I would observe in general from the scope of the apostle, viz. that in the great matter of justification the apostle argues from his own experience: the true way to get sound light in the main point of the justification of a sinner before God, is to study it in thy own personal concern; if it be bandied about by men as a notion only, as a point of truth, discoursing wantonly about it, it is all one in God's sight whether men be sound or unsound about it; they are unsound in heart how sound soever they are in head about it. The great way to know the right mind of God about the justification of a poor sinner, is for all to try it with respect to themselves. Would the apostle say, "I know how I am justified, and all the world shall never persuade me to join the righteousness of the law with the righteousness of Christ."

There are four points of doctrine that I would raise, and observe from the first part of these words:

1. That the grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner through the righteousness of Christ.

2. It is a horrible sin to frustrate the grace of God.

3. All that seek righteousness by the law do frustrate the grace of God in the gospel.

4. That no sound believer can be guilty of this sin.

I would speak to the first of these at this time: That the grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ alone. When the apostle speaks of it, how frequently is this term "grace" added? "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that

is in Christ Jesus," (Rom. iii. 24). "That being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

There are four things to be explained here, that will make our way plain to the proof of this point. What is justification? Who is it that doth justify? Who are justified? And upon what account?

1*st*, What is justification? We read much of it in our Bible, and the doctrine of it is reckoned one of the fundamental points of the true Christian religion, and so indeed it is. This grand doctrine, the fountain of our peace, and comfort, and salvation, was wonderfully darkened in the Popish kingdom; and the first light of the reformation, that God was pleased to break up in our forefathers' days, was mainly about this great doctrine. Justification is not barely the pardon of sin; it is indeed always inseparable from it; the pardon of sin is a fruit of it, or a part of it. Justification is God's acquitting a man, and freeing him from all attainder; it is God's taking off the attainder that the broken law of God lays upon every sinner. "Who is he that shall condemn? It is God that justifies," (Rom. viii. 33). Justification and condemnation are opposites; every one is under condemnation that is not justified, and every justified man is freed from condemnation. Justification is not sanctification; it is an old Popish error, sown in the hearts of a great many Protestants, to think that justification and sanctification are the same. Justification and sanctification are as far different as these two:—There is a man condemned for high treason against the king by the judge, and the same man is sick of a mortal disease; and if he dies not by the hands of the hangman to-day, he

may die of his disease to-morrow: it is the work of the physician to cure the disease, but it is an act of mercy from the king that must save him from the attainder. Justification is the acquitting and repealing the law-sentence of condemnation; sanctification is the healing of the disease of sin, that will be our bane except Christ be our physician.

Justification and sanctification are always inseparable, but they are wonderfully distinct. Justification is an act of God's free grace; sanctification is a work of God's Spirit: sanctification is a work wrought within us; justification is something done about us, and therefore justification is everywhere spoken of in the word in the terms of a court act.

*2dly*, Who is he that justifies? I answer, God only: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies," (Rom. viii. 33). Who shall condemn? He only can justify that gives the law: he only can justify that condemns for sin: he only can justify that is wronged by sin, (Mark ii. 7). The Pharisees blasphemed, it was in their darkness; but yet the truth that they spake was good, though the application of it was quite naught: "Why doth this man speak blasphemies? who can forgive sin, but God only?" In the case of the man sick of the palsy, whose sins Christ first forgave before he healed him of the palsy—so that the forgiveness of his sins was his justification, and the healing of his disease was as if it were the type of his sanctification—their application was wrong, in that they did not know that Christ was God, and that he had power on earth to forgive sins: but the truth itself was sound—"none can forgive sins but God only."

Justification is an act of the judge; it is only the

judge and lawgiver that can pronounce it: and "there is but one lawgiver," saith James, "that can both save and destroy," (chap. iv. 12). None properly offended by sin but God, and nothing violated by sin so immediately as the law of God.

*3dly*, Who is justified? Every one is not justified. What sort of a man is he that is justified? Justification is the acquitting of a man from all attainder, and it is God's doing alone; but what sort of a man is it that is justified? Is it a holy man? a man newly come from heaven? Is it a new sort of a creature, rarely made and framed? No: it is a sinner: it is an ungodly man: "God justifies the ungodly."

The man is not made godly before he is justified, nor is he left ungodly after he is justified; he is not made godly a moment before he is justified, but he is justified from his ungodliness by the sentence of justification: when he is dead in sins and trespasses, quickening comes, and life comes, (Eph. ii. 1).

*4thly*, Upon what account is all this done? And this is the hardest of all. You have heard that justification is the freeing of a man from all charge, and that it is done by God alone, and given to a man before he can do any thing of good—for no man can do any thing that is good till he be sanctified, and no man is sanctified till he is justified; but the grand question is, "How can God justly do this?" saith the apostle, (Rom. iii. 26). "That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." How can God be just, and yet justify an ungodly man? "To justify the wicked, and to condemn the righteous, are both an abomination in the sight of God," when practised by man, Prov. xvii. 15. How then can God justify the ungodly? The grand

account of this is, God justifies the ungodly for the sake of nothing in himself, but solely upon the account of this righteousness of Christ, that the apostle is here arguing upon: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," (Rom. iii. 24, 25). When God justifies a man, the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to him, and God deals with him as a man in Christ; and therefore his transgressions are covered, and the man is made the righteousness of God in Christ, because Christ is made of God unto him righteousness, (1 Cor. i. 30), "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness." Where is the poor man's righteousness that is justified? It is in Christ Jesus. For, (2 Cor. v. 21), "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And to be made the righteousness of God, is nothing else but to be made righteous before God in and through Jesus Christ.

These things considered, the proof of this point is very easy—That the grace of God shines gloriously in the way of justifying a sinner by the righteousness of Jesus Christ: I shall therefore add but a few things more in the proof of it.

*First,* In this way all is of God, and nothing of the creature's procuring, and therefore it is of grace. Grace always shines most brightly where man appears least; every thing that tends to advance the power and efficacy of man's working, always hinders the shining forth of the glory of the grace of God; but in this way of justifying us through the righteousness of Christ, grace shines forth most gloriously,

because it is all of God: we do nothing in it. To instance in a few things here,

1. The finding out of this righteousness by which we are justified is of God alone. If the question had been put to all the angels in heaven, and to many worlds of men, if this one question had been put, How can a just and holy God justify a sinner? no created understanding could ever have been able to find out how it could be done; it was the infinite wisdom of God alone that found out this way. He will send his own Son to be a sinless man, that shall sustain the persons, and bear the sins, and take away the sins of all that shall be justified. The native sense of all mankind is this: when we know any thing of God, we know that it stands with his nature to condemn sin, and hate the sinner; but how it can stand with his justice to acquit a sinner, it is God only that could find out that.

2. As the finding out of the way of our justification is of God alone, so the working out of it is Christ's alone. There was no creature of God's counsel in finding out the way, so there was no creature Christ's helper in making the way. All the great work of fulfilling the righteousness of the law was done by Christ alone; none could offer to help in the great work of bearing the weight of his Father's wrath, and bearing the burden of the justice of God, for the sins of his church. Our Lord was the alone bearer of this; he alone brought in everlasting righteousness, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Heb. ix. 26).

3. The applying of this righteousness is only of God also. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring it close unto the sinner by faith; and here we have

as little to do as in the former. There was none of God's everlasting counsel in the finding out this way, nor had Christ any helper in the work of redemption; and we help the Spirit of God as little in his work of applying this: for till the grace of God prevails upon the heart, there is a constant struggling against it. There are many poor sinners that have struggled with the Spirit of God seeking to save them, more than many believers have ever strove with Satan seeking to destroy them. All unbelievers are led more tamely to hell by the devil, than believers are led quietly to heaven by the Spirit of God.

4. The securing all this by the everlasting covenant is of God only. We seal God's covenant by our faith for the benefit of it; but it is Christ's great seal that is its security, even the seal of his own blood: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," (Matt. xxvi. 28). And so much for this first thing: The grace of God shines gloriously in the way of justifying a sinner by the righteousness of Christ; because it is altogether of God, the sinner hath no hand in it.

*Secondly,* This will further appear, if we consider what vile creatures the receivers of it are; they have nothing to procure it, nothing to deserve it, but a great deal to deserve the contrary. In that, Rom. v., they have three names: Ver. 6, we are called "ungodly,"—"In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Ver. 8, we are called "sinners,"—"Whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Ver. 10, we are called "enemies,"—"When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Here are three names: Ungodly! Sinners! Enemies!

the highest words whereby ill-deserving can be well expressed; and it is the usual way of the Spirit of God to lay open the worst in a poor sinner, when God is about to give the best; and all they that receive it receive this grace under these names. "God be merciful to me a sinner," saith the poor publican; and "this man," saith our Lord, "went down to his house justified," (Luke xviii. 13, 14). "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," saith Paul, (1 Tim. i. 15).

And not only is it so that they are undeserving and unworthy, but they are also very proud and vain, and have a great opinion of themselves; and must it not be great grace then to justify such men? "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," saith our Lord to the church of Laodicea; "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" even when Christ is courting them to buy of him his gold and white raiment, (Rev. iii. 17, 18).

*Thirdly*, The grace of God in justifying a sinner through the righteousness of Christ appears to be very glorious, even in the very naming of it: it is the grace of God; it must be great grace, for it is the grace of God; it is the grace of a holy God; it is the grace of a just God; it is the grace of a powerful God; it is the grace of that God that can do every thing: every name that exalts the glory of God, doth also raise the value of this grace: it is the grace of God towards vile sinners, and that makes it great indeed. Let us consider this grace of God a little.

This grace of God is dear to God, and therefore it is the more grace. The grace of God in justifying

us is dear to God; it cost the Father dear to part with his own Son; it cost the Son dear to part with his own life to bring in this righteousness; and, if I may so say, it cost the Holy Ghost dear to work the faith of this righteousness in the heart of a poor sinner. When we consider how all things else that God did were easily done but this. When the world was to be made, no more is to be done but "Let it be;" but when the world was to be redeemed, "Let it be" will not do; a body must be prepared for the Son, and that body must be sacrificed for sin, and be slain, and sustain the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; and all this to bring in an everlasting righteousness.

Again, this grace that was so dear to God comes to us good cheap, we give nothing for it: the Lord will take nothing for it, we have nothing to give: the apostle doth not think it enough to say, "being justified by his grace;" but he adds, "being justified FREELY by his grace," (Rom. iii. 24). "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life FREELY," (Rev. xxii. 17). Taking implies some freedom in it, but taking freely is a redoubling of the expression. This grace of God that is so dear to God, comes good cheap to us, it cost us nothing.

Again, this grace of God is everlasting; it is the eternal raiment of all believers, even of them that are in heaven. Saith the apostle, Rom. v. 21, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Observe, neither grace, nor righteousness, nor eternal life, nor Jesus our Lord, cease in heaven; they are all there together; Christ as the author of eternal life, and worker of righteousness; and the believer as the pos-

sessor of eternal life, and the enjoyer of this life; and grace as the high spring of all: grace is in heaven; the reign of grace is only in heaven. That of Rev. xix. 8. is by most understood to relate to the other world; and it is said there, that "unto the Lamb's wife it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white;" and that fine linen is the righteousness of Christ, in which the saints stand everlastingly accepted before God. "Behold I and the children that thou hast given me!" saith our Lord, (Heb. ii. 13), and their glory in heaven is to behold the glory that he had with the Father, as their head, before the world began, (John xvii. 24).

Again, it is grace, because it is very abundant: it is an usual thing in the Old Testament to call great things by the name of God, as the trees of God, the city of God, the river of God; now this grace of God is so called because it is great, exceedingly abundant: saith the apostle Paul concerning it, "The grace of our Lord Jesus was exceeding abundant towards me," (1 Tim. i. 14). Did ever any of you know how many sins you had? Yet you must have a great deal more grace, or you can never be saved; there must be more grace than sin, or you cannot be saved, (Rom. v. 20): "The law entered that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." I do not say, no man can be saved unless he hath more inherent grace than he hath inherent corruption in him; but, unless there be a greater abundance of the grace of God for covering of sin, than there is of sin to be covered, no man can be saved: the apostle adds a much more abundance to it. One would think there was enough of sin and guilt in the disobedience of the first Adam; and so there was; but, saith the

apostle, the matter is far greater here: "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification: for if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus," (ver. 16, 17, of that 5th chapter of the Romans). There is abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, needful to save any sinner. When the Lord makes this matter to balance in the eyes of his people, and there are great discoveries made to them of the aggravations and of the multitude of their sins; this is a common wicked thought arising in their awakened consciences, Can God forgive? Can God pass by so many and so great transgressions? It is a sinful thought; the plain meaning of it is, "Is there more grace in God than there is sin and guilt with me?" We were all undone if it was not so; if Christ's righteousness was not more able to justify than the first Adam's sin was to condemn, no man could be saved. The grace of God shines in this way of the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ, in that there is an abundance of it imparted to all them that partake of it.

Application.—You have heard that the grace of God shines gloriously in the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ: in all your dealings, then, with God, mind grace mainly: they that never had an errand to God for the blessing of justification, they may possibly be saved; but they are not yet in the way to salvation that were never yet concerned

about this question, How shall a man be acquitted before God? or that never treated with God about justification. In all your dealings with God still remember grace: when you come for justification, plead for it as grace: when you receive it, receive it as grace: and when you praise for it, praise for it as grace; and thus will you behave as the people of God have done. When you plead for it, plead for it as grace; bring nothing with you in your hand, offer nothing to God for your justification; it is a free gift: if God be pleased to give it, in his great bounty, you shall be saved. You have no reason to quarrel if God doth not give it: you have no reason to fear but God will give it. Though you do not deserve it, yet he hath promised it. As there is a fulness of righteousness in Christ to procure grace, so there is a fulness of grace in the tender of the gospel; and you are to believe that Christ is willing to make all this over to sinners.

When you receive justification, receive it as grace: sometimes we beg it as an alms, and sometimes in the gospel the Lord offers it as a gift, and we are to receive it as such. If the Lord tenders you the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, do not say you cannot receive it; do not say you are not meet for it. The question is, Are you in need of it? Are you not guilty? and is not a pardon suitable for the guilty? Receive it as a grace. The true reason why so many neglect right dealing with God for justification, and slight God's dealing with them about receiving it, is because their hearts stand at a distance from, and they have a sort of a quarrel with mere grace. As it is certain that nothing but grace can save the sinner, so it is as certain there is

nothing more unpleasing to the sinner than grace; than that good, which when received he must always own the bounty of the Giver, and never to eternity be able to say, "My own hand hath made me rich:" Christ will bring none to heaven that are in that mind. He that will not be rich in Christ, must be poor and condemned still in the first Adam. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," (2 Cor. viii. 9). The riches of a believer stands in the poverty of Christ; and every true believer counts Christ's poverty his riches.

## SERMON II.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—GAL. II. 24.

I TOLD you the last day (what you may learn by your own reading), that the scope of the apostle in this epistle is, to teach and defend the doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith alone. In the text the apostle hath two arguments for this truth, against the contrary error, with which the Galatians were plagued; and both arguments are taken from the absurdities that follow upon the contrary doctrine.

1*st*, That seeking righteousness by the works of the law, doth frustrate and make void the grace of God.

2*dly*, That it makes Christ's death to be in vain: and there is nothing revealed by the Lord, in his word, more sacred, and more awful than these two—

the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and therefore it must needs be a great wickedness to enervate, and overthrow both these. From the first part of these words I observed four things, and have already spoken to the first of them, and would speak to the next at this time.

1st, The grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner through Christ's righteousness alone. All the revelations that are made of this great way of God's justifying a sinner, are all made with a high deference to the grace of God, as the original thereof.

*2dly,* I am now to speak to this point—That frustrating the grace of God is a great and horrible sin: the apostle here brings it in as such, and denies his concern in it; "I do not frustrate the grace of God." The scope of his discourse leads me to this head: "If I seek righteousness by the works of the law, I should frustrate the grace of God; but I do not seek righteousness that way, therefore I do not frustrate the grace of God." Frustrating the grace of God is a great and horrible sin: there are two things I would speak to upon this head—to shew you how this sin is committed—and then, wherein its greatness doth appear; for there are many that commit this sin, and when they have done, think nothing of it.

1*st,* How is this sin committed that the apostle here vindicates himself from? "I do not frustrate the grace of God." This sin is committed two ways: 1*st,* By not receiving the grace of God when it is tendered. *2dly,* By seeking other ways and shifts for righteousness than the grace of God.

*First,* Frustrating the grace of God is, not receiving it; the grace of God is frustrated when it is

not received: the right entertaining of it is by receiving it. The apostle exhorts the Corinthians, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that you receive not the grace of God in vain," (2 Cor. vi. 1). I have told you in what sense the grace of God might be received in vain, and in what sense it could not. The doctrine of the grace of God, the offer of the grace of God, may be received in vain, and rejected, as many times it is; but the grace of God itself cannot be received in vain, for it always worketh its effect wheresoever it lights. The grace of God is an irresistible principle of salvation: never man had one mite of the grace of God, but he was saved by it. Christ Jesus hath two quivers, if I may so say: there is a common quiver, out of which he draws some arrows, and shoots them at sinners, and they can fence against these well enough, and never be hurt by them; but then he hath other arrows, that are marked with his love, and sent by his power, and there is no guarding against them. As there are arrows of destruction, so there are arrows of salvation: "Let thine arrows be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies," is the prayer, Psalm xlv. My work then is to shew how it is that the grace of God is not received.

1st, The grace of God tendered in the gospel, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, is not received when it is not minded. There is little hope of that man's salvation that doth not think of salvation, or when the matter is neglected. "How shall we escape," saith the apostle, "if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3). The true sense of the original word lies mainly in this, not so much in a stated formal enmity to it, but only in a careless indiffe-

rency about it: the grace of God is not received when it is not minded. Therefore, would you know when you profit by the gospel, know it this way: if what you hear from the word doth not occasion many thoughts in your hearts, you get no good at all. If the matter of salvation do not become the matter of your serious meditation, you receive the grace of God in vain. God may say concerning such men, "They will not so much as think of my proposals to them."

2dly, People do not receive the grace of God when they do not see their need of it, when they do not see their absolute need of it. As long as a man hath this dream—and every natural man falls into such a dream—as long as a man thinks in his vain mind that any thing else but the sovereign grace of God can save him, this man will never receive the grace of God. It is impossible that a man can receive it till he see that nothing else will do his business. Woe be to them that think any thing but grace can save them: they are in a forlorn state indeed!

3dly, They that do not believe that the grace of God alone can save them, they do not receive it neither; for as the grace of God is sent to men as that which they do simply stand in need of, and as that which nothing can supply the want of, so it is sent as a sovereign remedy, that whatsoever ails the poor creature it will do it for them. So much for this first thing: They that do not receive the grace of God, are guilty of this great sin of frustrating the grace of God.

*Secondly,* This sin is also committed by men's taking other methods and shifts to obtain the favour of God than this grace alone; they frustrate the

grace of God. I would speak a little to this under two heads: 1st, I would shew you the cause of it. 2dly, I would shew the effects that proceed from those causes.

I. Of the cause of it. The world is full of it: this heresy, if I may so say, runs through the whole earth; no man is quite free from it but only the sound believer. A man may be orthodox in his judgment, and subscribe to the orthodox doctrine, and Protestant truth; but every natural man is a heretic in this matter: he hath secretly something else in his eye to recommend him to God, and to make his state safe before God, besides the righteousness of Christ. Now the cause of this universal hankering after ways of people's own devising to do their business with God, without this grace of God through Christ, is what I would speak a little to.

It flows from nature: now nature is so strong a spring, that nothing but the mighty grace of God can turn it, it is so strong a principle. I would shew this in a little.

1st, The grace of God in saving sinners by Christ Jesus is above nature in its best state; it is above sinless nature. If you could suppose such a thing as this, that there was a man as holy as the first Adam was; if God should create another man as holy as the first Adam was, and bring to this man the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of God in him, it would be above his nature. It is above sinless nature; it is that which Adam did not know, neither was he bound to know it, for it was not revealed to him; nor did he need to know it, for there was another way provided for his standing, that he might have kept.

2dly, This way is not only above sinless nature, but it is quite contrary to corrupt nature. If it be above sinless nature, it must needs be far above corrupt nature; but not only is it so, but it is also cross and contrary to it. There are in this corrupt nature four things that are its strength, and from that strength comes this enmity to this way of salvation.

1. There is in this corrupt nature dismal darkness and ignorance, expressed by the apostle in the abstract, (Eph. v. 8). "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Not only are they dark and blind, but they are darkness and blindness. Now in this darkness, as to this matter, I will name two or three things: 1st, There is ignorance of the righteousness and holiness of God, (Rom. x. 3). 2dly, There is ignorance of the holy law of God, (Rom. vii. 10). 3dly, There is utter ignorance of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus. A little to each of these:

1st, In every natural man there is an ignorance of the righteousness and holiness of God. I know that in man's nature there is a knowledge that there is a God, and that this God is a righteous and a just God. The greatest heathens, by the mere light of nature, have arrived at some competent knowledge of this; but the exactness of this righteousness of God never did any natural men know. They do not know the unspottedness of His righteousness, nor how unsufferable to him the least impurity is. Would any bold sinners venture to present to God their rottenness and vileness, if they knew God's righteousness? The righteousness of God is such an awful thing, that no natural man can understand it, but he must be presently confounded.

2dly, Every natural man is ignorant of the strictness of the law of God; the severity of God's law in forbidding every sin, and in condemning every sinner, without any respect to any sin, or to any man that commits it. The law of God is an impartial rule of righteousness, that condemns every transgression; and it cannot do otherwise: it is the glory of the law so to do; its strictness makes it judge all sin; and its righteousness makes it condemn all sinners; and therefore, when this righteousness of God's law is once discovered, it presently breaks all the confidence of a natural man. "I was alive without the law once," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. vii. 9, "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." How could the apostle Paul be said to be without the law? I believe that the apostle Paul, even in his natural state, was better acquainted with the law, and the Old Testament, than any man in London now is; for the Jews, even to this day, teach their children with great carefulness: now the apostle Paul was one of the best Jews in all that country. How then could this man be said to be without the law? He had the law in his mind, and in his memory, and in his hands, and was exceeding zealous for it—"I was," saith he, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," (Phil. iii. 6). Aye, but the man only thought so, when he did not know the law of God; but when the commandment came, it made another manner of discovery. It condemned those things in him that he never thought to be sin before, and it made other things in him to be exceeding sinful. All natural men are under utter darkness about this; and therefore it is no

wonder that they betake themselves to other ways than the grace of God in Christ.

3dly, All natural men are ignorant of the righteousness of God in Christ.

2. In every natural man there is pride. Every natural man is a proud man; proud towards God. That which goes under the name of pride amongst men is greatly mistaken. Pride towards man is a base thing; but it is pride towards God that I am speaking of. The poor sinner thinks that he is not quite so bare and empty, but that he hath something of his own wherein he may stand accepted before God. Every natural man doth think so. It fares with a natural man as it doth with some poor men that are born of great families, whose fathers left them, as we use to say, a high birth, but a poor purse. Now this proud gentleman chooses a great deal rather to wear his own thread-bare coat, than another man's livery. Just so it is with sinners: their father Adam was a great lord,—lord of this world, heir of righteousness, rich in stock—enough to have made all his posterity rich before God; but he broke and failed, and turned us all beggars into the world. But there comes another person, God's own Son, and he offers to clothe the poor beggar; but the poor proud man had rather go to hell in the rags that his father Adam left him, than go to heaven in the robe that Christ offers him, dyed in his own blood.

3. In every natural man there is awful trifling about the great concerns of salvation. The truth is, people are not thoroughly awakened, nor in good earnest about the matters of salvation. It lies not near their heart as a weighty question, "What shall I do to be saved?" These thoughts do not press

them, "I am a poor man that must shortly die, and this crazy carcass of mine will shortly moulder into the dust of the grave; but my soul must live for ever in, and enter upon an eternal state, as soon as the last breath of my body expires; and what shall become of me then?" The greatest part of the world trifle about this great question, "What shall I do to be saved, to be secure to eternity?" What a shameful thing is it to think of this! I have often told them that I have spoken to,—and it is to be told till it be mended,—that it were a happy thing if people would but spend half that time, nay a quarter of that time, in secret thoughts about salvation, that they spend in hearing the word of salvation; and it is a hard matter if people cannot be prevailed with about this. I can well assure you, that all the solid soul-thriving of the hearers of the gospel is not so much in what they hear, in the preaching of the word, as in what they digest in their secret thoughts and meditations about it. Now, is it any wonder that people take to any courses about their salvation, when they thus trifle about it? For if the end be not precious in a man's eyes, you can never expect to have him thoughtful about the means.

4. In all natural men there is unbelief of God's word. It is a hard question to resolve, What was the first sin? Any child can tell you, that the first sin of mankind was eating the forbidden fruit: it is true, the first sin was ripe in that action; but what was the first wandering thought from God? Whether it was the man's discontent with the state that he was made in; or aspiring after a higher state than that in which he was made; or a jealousy of God; or unbelief of the word of God: that unbelief was in

it is most certain. The serpent began his temptation this way, "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden? Hath God said you shall surely die? Ye shall not surely die," (Gen. iii. 1, 4). The scope of his temptation was this, to bring in sin and ruin upon the world, by making sinless Adam to doubt of the truth of God's threatening; and he well knew that if once the awful faith of the truth of God's threatening was weakened in their minds, that they would soon make bold on the sin. God's threatening was as a kind of fence against the sin: "In the day that thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." "Assure thyself of death if ever thou meddle with the forbidden fruit." Satan knew that death was terrible to man, and that he would not easily rush upon it; "aye, but," saith he, "God hath not said ye shall surely die, but you shall live, and be as gods, if you transgress." Sirs, the devil brought in the first sin and ruin upon mankind, by the unbelief of God's word of threatening. And he brings in the eternal ruin of men under the gospel by unbelief of God's word of promise: every natural man hath an evil heart of unbelief in him, as the apostle warns all to take heed of, (Heb. iii. 12), "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." This matter of unbelief is many ways spoken of in the word: the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, stands all in the word of God. If you ask the last question concerning a man's faith, you must resolve it into the word of God: there are, indeed, many questions that go before it, but this must be the last. If you ask, How may a sinner be saved? The answer is, By the righteousness of Christ. If

you ask again, Who is this Jesus Christ, whose righteousness will be the salvation of all them that have it? He is the great Son of God, that took our sins on him. Well, but how shall this righteousness be mine? By faith alone: if I lay hold of it, and venture my soul on it, it is mine? Aye, but the last question is, How do you know that it shall be so? God hath said it in his word, Acts x. 43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Now, every natural man having unbelief in him, God's word hath no weight on him. We find they proclaim their unbelief in every thing. When God commands, they proclaim their unbelief in disobeying; when God corrects them, they proclaim their unbelief in rushing again upon the same courses that God punishes them for; when God threatens and warns the sinner of his danger in such a sin, the man proclaims his unbelief by staying still in it: and what are all these but acts of gross unbelief? When God commands, the man thinks that God means not as he speaks: when God threatens, the unbeliever thinks God will not do as he threatens: when God promises, saith the same unbelief, "Though God speaks fair, he will not be as good as his word."

Now, is it any wonder that every natural man takes another way of salvation besides the righteousness of Christ, when every natural man hath these four woful things in him? And, indeed, none can do otherwise till these four things are overthrown in him—till the darkness is removed by the illumination of the Spirit of God—and the pride be brought down by humbling grace—and the security of the conscience be brought down by awakening grace—

and till the power of unbelief be broke by the Spirit's working faith. So much for the causes of this.

II. I am now to shew what the effects are that flow from these causes; or, what flows from this woful natural aversion in all men from the grace of God, and from their inclinations to frustrate it.

1st, Hence it comes to pass that the world is filled with fancies and devices of men to please God.

This runs through the whole earth: the religion (if I may call it by that name) of the Pagans, the religion of the Turks and the Mahometans, and of the Papists, however they may differ in a great many points of doctrine, and particular circumstances of worship, yet they all agree in this; all these religions, and all religions in the world, except the true, are filled with many devices of men to render themselves acceptable to God The Lord brings them in (Micah vi. 6), making this inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Pray take notice here: one of the grossest idolatries that ever was in the world, and the most abominable act of it, is this, when parents, to pacify God for their sins, have offered their children in sacrifice to their idols: this hath been frequently practised in the world, and, it may be, is at this day in some parts of the world. Whence can this be, that there should be so strange a violation of one of the strongest bonds of nature? It is not to be supposed that these people did so because

they did not love their children: no doubt but they loved them as well as you do yours; but only, here lay the matter: they were under a strong conviction of sin, and under strong desires to please God; and they were ignorant of the true sacrifice, and therefore they offer to God what they think best, and what they love best; and that they hope God will accept most kindly from them. Sirs, you think there are many fopperies in Popery, fit only to be laughed at, and so indeed there are: their whipping themselves about that time of the year they call Lent; and great persons do this, kings, and queens, and lords, and great men. One would think it strange that so many great people should play the fool so: the true reason of it lies here,—they have a conscience of sin, and they know they are sinners, and they do not know the true way of peace with God through the righteousness of Christ, and they are taught these foolish ways, and therefore they pursue them. And truly, if the light of the gospel should be darkened yet much more in England, I cannot tell how many silly professors amongst us might be drawn even into this foppery. It is natural for all men ignorant of the righteousness of God in Christ, to devise ways of their own to render themselves acceptable in the sight of God.

*2dly*, The next effect of this woful aversion from the grace of God, in justifying us by the righteousness of Christ, is in men's going to the law, and the works of it. I do but name this, because I shall speak more largely to it by itself, under the third and next doctrine.

*3dly*, I would speak something to the sad effects of this, that are found even in them whom God

saves. This aversion from the grace of God is so natural, that it puts forth itself strongly in them that the Lord is at work savingly upon; and I will name a few things about this, that some here can witness to, and I am sure that many more can witness to them than are here.

1. Hence it comes to pass that, in many who are saved in the issue, there is a long sorrowful trouble of mind that they live under, and all the world shall not persuade them what the true cause of it is. They are full of sorrow and complainings; no other language to be heard to God or man, but many sorrowful complaints; their corruptions are strong, their souls dead and dark, their consciences disquieted. And what is the true reason of all this? They are yet averse from giving glory to the sovereign grace of God in saving them by Christ. Many sorrowful hours many of the elect of God have gone through in the strength of this corruption, and they have never seen it till a long while after. It is a shame and reproach to professors, and a dishonour to our Lord Jesus Christ, that so many in whom the root of the matter is, have their hearts sinking within them when relief is so plainly provided for them. The true reason is, because they are averse, and not willing, nor inclined to be indebted solely to grace, and to have all their supplies singly from it.

2. From hence it also comes to pass, that there are so many outbreakings of sin, or at least the working of it in the hearts of many that the Lord hath a mind to save, and doth work savingly upon. How many poor creatures are there that know this? That from the time that the Lord first began to deal with them, and made them serious about salvation,

their corruptions have grown more strong, and Satan more formidable and vexing; and, it may be, they are left of God to commit some gross sin, that they were never guilty of before. Whence comes this? It is not only from the strength of temptation, nor is corruption grown stronger; but here lies the reason: Now God hath begun to awaken them, and they are not yet disposed kindly to yield themselves up unto the entire conduct of grace; not willing to give the grace of God its proper employment: but this is the way people generally take whensoever they are awakened, and made serious about salvation; then they fall to work, and set about duty—they pray, and hear, and read, and repent, and labour to reform their conversation, and in the mean time they are utterly unacquainted with employing Christ; and, therefore, the Lord in his righteous judgment leaves them to themselves, and lets them see that they must stand upon another bottom, or they will surely totter and fall; that they must be quite weaned from themselves, and all things made new in Christ, or nothing will be done rightly.

3. And thus some, as they live sorrowfully all their days, so they also die sadly: they have been leaning on their own righteousness as far as they could all their life long; sometimes hanging upon one twig, and sometimes upon another; and one breaks, and the other breaks, and here they get a fall, and there they get a fall; but at last, if the Lord hath mercy upon them, they are made to see the vanity of all these shifts, and then they betake themselves in earnest to that which is without them, to a righteousness that they have no hand in, that is wrought out by Christ alone, and given by pure grace. So much

for this first head, How this sin of frustrating the grace of God is committed.

*2dly*, I am now to shew the sinfulness, and the greatness, of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. The apostle is here vindicating himself from it: "I do not," saith he, "frustrate the grace of God." Now, there are two things especially that aggravate all sins, and the more of them there be in any sin, the more sinfulness is there in that sin. 1st, The direct tendency of any sin to damnation. 2dly, The direct enmity that there is in any sin to the grace of God; and wheresoever there is a sin that is especially framed both these ways, that sin must needs be a great one.

1. This sin of frustrating the grace of God is directly against man's salvation, and tends directly to damnation. All sin against the law tends to damnation by its desert; every sin deserves hell. Every sin against the law of God works out wrath by deserving; but sin against the gospel works out wrath by special activity, by its apt acting; and there is a great difference between these two: a man that commits a sin against the law, he commits a sin that deserves death; but he that sins against the grace of the gospel, in that very sin he works out his own death. Other sins expose a man to the wrath of God as a judge, but this sin is like self-murder, the man executes the law upon himself. Every man by nature is under a sentence of condemnation; but rejecting the grace of God leaves and binds a man under that condemnation: there is no other remedy for it, but only the grace of God through Christ; therefore rejecting that, is rejecting the only remedy.

2. This sin is directly against the glory of God. There is a great deal of the glory of God concerned in his grace. This grace of God tendered to us through Jesus Christ, is God's great plot and contrivance for his own glory; and frustrating of it is all that man can do to frustrate God, and to disappoint him in his main design. Blessed be God, no creature can do this; but woe be to them that do all they can against it. The Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," (Luke vii. 30). Sirs, God would never have suffered the first Adam to have fallen, unless he had had a greater contrivance for his own glory in raising him up again. God would never have suffered the dishonour that sin's entrance brought upon him in the world, unless he had designed the bringing about of greater glory to himself by the manifestation of his grace. Therefore, "where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded;" and that brings a great deal more honour to God than sin brings dishonour. The grace of God is the very bowels and the heart of God; and to frustrate this, is to kick against the very bowels of God. The grace of God is all through Jesus Christ; it flows through him, and therefore all reflections upon the grace of God reflect upon him. The grace of God is tendered to men by the Holy Ghost; and, therefore, refusing and frustrating the grace of God is rejecting of the Holy Ghost. In a word, this grace of God is the great scope of the whole Bible; and to frustrate the grace of God, is to make the whole Bible in vain, both Old and New Testament too. The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, but it is through faith that is in Christ Jesus, (2 Tim. iii. 15).

Application.—There are only two words that I would speak to for the improving of this doctrine. Is frustrating the grace of God such a horrible sin? Then, 1st, Do you all beware of it. 2dly, Receive this grace of God; for there is no other way to avoid the frustrating of the grace of God, but only by receiving it.

1*st*, I would have you all beware of this sin of frustrating the grace of God; but, more especially, I would direct a warning of fear against this sin unto several sorts of persons.

1. Unto moral, civil, well-natured people, good livers, as we use to call them. Through the mercy of God, some are born of a better nature, as we call it, than others; of a sweet easy temper; and it is a great mercy to have a well-tempered mind, by a natural constitution, as well as it is to have a well-framed body. Now, when this virtuous natural temper hath the advantage of a godly education, these sort of people come quickly to look very well; and, therefore, they ought to take great heed. You civil, well-natured people, do you have a great care of frustrating the grace of God, for it is a sin that you are especially tempted to. There are some people so ill-natured, and of so bad a temper, that they need, as we use to say, a great deal of the grace of God to save them. And are there any that do not need the grace of God? The Lord save any of you from thinking so! He is in a woful case indeed that thinks he doth not need the grace of God. Moral, civil people are in great danger of this sin: they think they have a good stock of their own to set up with, and therefore they do not borrow of Christ.

2. People that have taken upon them the pro-

fession of religion, had need to take heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. They have taken upon them a profession, it may be they know not how, nor wherefore; but it is come upon them. If you be clothed with the garment of profession, have great care of this sin. There are many that profess the grace of God, that yet are strangers to the thing itself, and they are in a very dangerous case.

3. They that boast of outward privileges should have a care of this sin of frustrating the grace of God: they were baptized when they were children, and have heard the word, and attended upon ordinances, and they begin to think themselves fair before God for the hope of eternal life. They are blameless in their walk and conversation. Let such people, in an especial manner, take heed of this sin. I can assure you that a blameless conversation hath been a great temptation to a great many to undervalue the grace of God, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. These sort of people were never sick at heart.

4. Awakened souls; they whose consciences are awakened, have great need to take heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. The Lord sometimes makes both light and fire too to dart in upon the consciences of poor sinners, and they begin to see and feel what they never saw nor felt before; and when it is thus with them, sometimes, they think things are a great deal better with them than they were before; and, sometimes, they think it is a great deal worse with them; and they that in their awakening think it to be a great deal worse with them than it was before, are in a more hopeful state than they that think it is better with them; for it is not

a thorough awakening, if the person thinks that awakening to be enough. Such people should take heed of this sin, lest they frustrate the grace of God, for there are two things that they are especially endangered by.

1. By the force of this conviction they set about duty, and that pretty warmly; and these are lovely things in the eyes of poor creatures that never knew before what praying and reading the word of God were; but when once their consciences come to be awakened, they begin to get alone, and cry to the Lord. Now, when the soul is in this case, it had need take great heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. How many poor awakened sinners are there that have made a pillow to sleep to hell upon with their own duties and performances, as if it were by the righteousness of the law! And thus they do not submit to the righteousness of God in Christ, nor do they attain to the rest that remains for the people of God, (Rom. x. 3, Heb. iv. 9).

2. If they do not sit down upon their duties, then, on the other hand, they are apt to be quite discouraged, and to give up all for lost. An awakened conscience, if it be thoroughly awakened, is upon the point of despair; and the point of despair is the point of ruin, or the point of salvation, as God pleases to issue it. It is the turning point. When the poor sinner's conscience is awakened to see its lost and undone condition, in that case he is just on the point of winning or losing for evermore. If the man hearkens to God, and gives glory to his grace, by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, the bargain is made for evermore; but if the poor

sinner turns aside, and stops in any thing short of this, then either the disease grows greater, or else a hardness comes in the room of it, that is worse than the disease itself. That is the first exhortation:— Have a great care of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. And, to that end,

*2dly*, Give the grace of God a hearty welcome. There is no other way to prevent the sin of frustrating the grace of God, but by receiving and welcoming it. Welcome the grace of God for your work, but not for the devil's work. All God's work, that which God craves of you; all that you may give to the grace of God to do for you; all the work that you have to do with God, that you may give to the grace of God to do for you; only do not set the grace of God to do the devil's work; that is sinning, turning the grace of God into wantonness. The grace of God will do every thing for us but the devil's work. And, if I may so say, he hath a great deal of the spirit of the devil in him, that will give so precious a thing as the grace of God to do the devil's work. Aye, but how shall we receive the grace of God? I answer, three ways. 1st, Doubt not your need of it. 2dly, Do not delay your accepting it. 3dly, Do not question your title to it.

1. Doubt not your need of it. If the Lord hath a mind to save you, I know very well there will be no great need of this caution. Every sinner that God saves effectually, is a person that not only thinks he is needy of the grace of God, but he thinks he is more needy of it than any body else in the world; that if there was any such man in the world that could be saved without grace, he was the farthest from such a one; that if there was any man in the

world that needed more grace than ordinary, he was the man.

2. Do not delay your accepting of grace whensoever it is revealed to you. Whensoever you have the offer of the grace of God, whensoever you are about the means of grace, labour to get this grace itself, "Therefore the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. iii. 7). You may not hear his voice to-morrow; hardness of heart grows mightily by delays.

3. Do not question your title to it. I mean this,—Make no doubt but that it is as lawful and as allowable in God's sight for you to lay hold on the saving grace of God, as ever it was for any sinner in the world. I do not mean that graceless people should presently think that they have a title to the grace of God; for no man hath a title to it till he receives it. But this I say, the offer of the grace of God, in the gospel, gives fair warning and liberty. for every one to embrace it. "He that will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely," (Rev. xxii. 17). And that which is thus freely offered, and freely given, should be thankfully welcomed, and thankfully received, when it is enjoyed.

## SERMON III.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—GAL. II. 21.

WHEN I first entered on these words, I told you what the scope of the apostle was in this epistle: he is here bringing forth arguments against that error

that the Galatian churches were plagued with; and arguments for that truth of the gospel that he had planted amongst them, and taught them. The truth was this, That the righteousness of a sinner for justification was only in Christ. The error of the Galatians lay in this, That something of the righteousness of the law was to be mixed therewith. My text contains two arguments against this error, drawn from a common natural head of arguing against error, by the absurdities that necessarily flow from it. Now there are two grand absurdities that flow from this doctrine of the law in point of justification, 1st, That it frustrates the grace of God; 2dly, That it makes Christ's death to be in vain: and two more abominable things cannot be well thought of; and people have great need to fear, and to take heed of any doctrine that hath any tendency to either of them. The first of these the apostle expresses in his own person: "I do not frustrate the grace of God." And here he speaks like a believer, and not like a minister nor an apostle; so he discourses from ver. 16, speaking of himself and the rest of the godly, like ordinary believers, that betook themselves to this way of relief by Christ's righteousness alone. I proposed four observations to speak to.

1*st*, That the grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner through the righteousness of Christ: and this I have spoke to.

2*dly*, That frustrating the grace of God is a great and horrible sin; for so it is expressed by the apostle, "I do not frustrate the grace of God." As if he should have said, "Blessed be God, I am not in that road; I am not one that frustrates the grace of God; I am saved by it." How the grace of God is frus-

trated, and how great the sin is, I spoke to the last day. The revelation of the grace of God, and the tender of it, and the urging of it, may be frustrated, and is, by many: but the grace itself, in its powerful conveyance by the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men, always reaches its end. The grace of God is irresistible in its closest powerful application: this I also spoke to; and would only add a word or two further about the greatness of this sin of seeking righteousness by the law, and thereby frustrating the grace of God.

1. This is a sin that but few in the world can commit. The greatest part of them that go to hell cannot commit this sin; they never frustrated the grace of God. Indeed all that are finally guilty of it go to hell; but all that go to hell are not guilty of this sin. The greatest part of the world never frustrated the grace of God, for they never heard of it; and, therefore, our Lord pronounces a woe against Capernaum, against Chorazin and Bethsaida, and tells them that they were in a worse case than Sodom and Gomorrah, than Tyre and Sidon, (Matt. xi. 21), because the grace of God was never offered them as it was to the others. Sirs, let me tell you, the worst quarters in hell are for those persons that are nearest to Christ, and yet not in him by faith: of all sinners such drop deepest into the pit.

2. The devils are not guilty of this sin. There is not a devil in hell, nor out of it, that is so guilty of this sin of frustrating the grace of God, as thousands of professors in London are. The devils are haters of the grace of God; but the grace of God was never tendered to them: they only hate the grace of God as it is tendered to men, and envy it; but the grace of God was never offered to the devils. The

way of preserving the holy angels, and the way of justice to the damned spirits, proclaim greatly the wonderful privilege that we have in the gospel. The holy angels are kept, and they received grace, for the election of grace fell on them: they are called the elect angels. When that great apostasy was in the upper house, all the reprobate angels fell of their own accord, and all the elect angels stood: and that election of grace towards angels ran through Jesus Christ, who was to be their preserving head. There is something that looks like this in the word of God.

But recovering grace to angels was never given; the angels that stood had preserving grace given them, to keep them in their first station; but the angels that fell had no recovering grace given them. "Christ took not on him," saith the apostle, "the nature of angels, but was born of the seed of Abraham." And thence it came to pass, that the devils themselves are not guilty of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. Surely then people had need to take great heed that they be not guilty of a worse sin than that which the devils can commit. There is no creature that hath frustrated the grace of God, but that creature that hath the offer of the grace of God.

3. Frustrating the grace of God is a sin that none that are in hell are guilty of. All that are finally guilty of it on earth are sent to hell, but none that are in hell are guilty of it; for when once that last sentence is executed upon them, the door of grace and mercy is for ever shut upon them. So that it is the gospel-sinner only who can frustrate the grace of God, who is guilty of that sin; and that but a small part of the world are guilty of it; that the

devils in hell are not guilty of it, that all the damned in hell are not guilty of it, though they rage, and roar, and blaspheme; and all sorts of wickedness we may well conclude to be in their miserable state: but frustrating the grace of God is a sin not to be found in hell, because grace enters not there. So much shall serve for this second point of doctrine, That it is a horrible sin to frustrate the grace of God. I come now to speak to the next doctrine.

*3dly*, To seek righteousness by the works of the law, is to frustrate the grace of God: for this is the scope of the apostle's argument. It is to shew that there is no righteousness to be had by the law; and this is one argument that he proves it by, "I do not," saith he, "frustrate the grace of God." It is, as if he should have said, "If I sought righteousness by the works of the law, I should frustrate the grace of God; but I do not seek righteousness by the law, for I am dead to the law, and therefore I do not frustrate the grace of God." There are two things under this doctrine that I would speak to—1st, What is it to seek righteousness by the law? 2dly, How doth it appear that seeking righteousness by the works of the law is frustrating the grace of God? For they that are guilty of this sin of seeking righteousness by the works of the law, they are very loath to take in this, that they frustrate the grace of God: they will say, that they give all respect to the grace of God; even the self-righteous Pharisee could own the grace of God, (Luke xviii. 11), "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" "I thank God, that I am so good as I am;" when he was a poor, vain, self-conceited man all the while.

1. What is it to seek righteousness by the works

of the law? By law here I mean the holy spotless law of God. The law of man hath nothing to do in the point of righteousness before God. This seeking of righteousness by the law is righteousness in God's sight; the apostle states the matter so. No man is justified by the law in the sight of God. That a man is justified by the law in the sight of men, nobody can deny. We should be very careful to justify ourselves in the sight of men by the law, and our conformity to it; but this righteousness here spoken of is righteousness in the sight of God, and righteousness by the law of God; and it stands in three things.

1st, Righteousness by the law is that which obtains a man's acceptance with God. That is righteousness by the law that procures a man's acceptance with God; upon the account of which he stands before God as a righteous man, and is dealt with accordingly. Now, he that seeks righteousness by the law in this sense, is one who dreams, that by doing and obeying what the law requires, he may work out that for which he may stand righteous and accepted in God's sight. And that is one way this sin is committed.

2dly, In this righteousness before God by the works of the law, there is an expectation of impunity for all that is past in transgressing the law. And we find that this must necessarily be the righteousness of a holy man, who stands in a state of acceptance with God; but the righteousness of a man who hath been once a sinner must be by having that which may bring him into a state of impunity and safety of all the transgressions that he hath been guilty of before. Now, men are guilty of seeking righteousness by the

works of the law this second way, when they do, or think to do, that for which God will forgive all their transgressions, and forget all that they have done: and of this the Pharisee made no question: though he was a sinner, yet he comes and prays, and expects acceptation in God's sight, and the forgiveness of his sins, upon the account of the good that he had done.

3dly, In this righteousness by the works of the law there is a title to eternal life. He that, by what he doth, expects to have a right conferred upon him to eternal life, is a man that seeks righteousness by the law: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" said the poor young legalist, (Matt. xix. 16). I would fain have eternal life, and would fain have a right to it: Master, tell me what good thing shall I do to get it. These are the three ways by which men seek righteousness by the law:—To do that whereby a man may obtain acceptance before God: To do that for which he may obtain pardon and impunity from God: To do that for which he may have a right conferred on him to eternal life. But, you will say, this is so gross Popery, that there is no Protestant guilty of it. Alas! alas! every natural man is guilty of it; and it is only the almighty power of the Spirit of God that can erase it out of their hearts. I will offer you some plain proofs of this.

1. How many are there, when their hearts are examined, must own that their eyes are altogether on the precepts of the law, and not a thought on the promises of the gospel? How many poor creatures are there that begin to be thoughtful about their salvation, insomuch that they make people that are

about them, who are ignorant and charitable, think that they are hopeful Christians. But try these people this way, and you will find that all the exercise of their religion is about the precepts of the law, and they have no exercise at all about the promises of the gospel. He that minds only the precepts, is only a doer; and he that minds not the promise, he is no believer: for the precept is the rule of practice; but it is the promise that is the foundation of faith. Now, how can that man be reckoned a believer, that hath no heart-exercise about the promises?

2. A great many people are mightily taken up about their own works, and but very little about Christ's. Our righteousness doth not stand in our own works; but stands in Christ's works, what Christ did, and suffered for us in his life, and death, and resurrection; therein stands our righteousness. Now, how many poor creatures are there that reckon it a great matter, and glory mightily in their own doings: if they pray, and hear, and read, and can but make any sort of reformation in their conversation, how big do these things appear in their eyes! But Christ's life and death, and all his great performances for our salvation, are mean and low, and of small esteem with them. And do not these sort of people seek righteousness by the law? Aye surely.

3. They look for eternal life, but they look for it as a reward of works, and not as an inheritance given by gift and grace; and all servants and slaves must do so, and all natural men are slaves, they are children of the bondwoman, (Gal. iv. 31); they work for fear of punishment, and in hopes of the crown: they work for wages; the wages they love, and would have, but the work they hate. Whereas the be-

liever acts just the contrary; he loves the work, and he expects the wages as the gift of grace from the blessed Father he serves. The apostle makes a great distinction between these two; "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, (Gal. iv. 7). Every man that is for righteousness by the works of the law is a servant; he looks upon God as his master, and the law as his master's will, and he sets about obeying with all his might. Now, is not this a good servant? Yes. But all such servants go to hell: you must be children, for none but children are saved. And, indeed, there are none true servants to him, but they that are children: they are but slaves, and are cast out, that do not serve with their love, and expect the inheritance only as a gift of grace. So much for that first thing, What it is to seek righteousness by the works of the law.

2. I am now to shew you, that seeking righteousness by the works of the law, is to frustrate the grace of God: and I would shew it—first in point of doctrine—and then in point of practice.

1st, As to point of doctrine. In the matter of righteousness before God, the law and the gospel are perfectly opposite, and they are only so in this point. The law and the gospel agree sweetly together in all things else; but in this point of the righteousness of a man before God, the law and the gospel are quite opposite one to another. The gospel comes to bring in another salvation than the law thought of; and the law destroys the salvation of the gospel. The law and gospel, in point of righteousness before God, are exactly opposite; "And if by grace, then it is no more by works, otherwise grace is no more

grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, for otherwise works were no more works," (Rom. xi. 6). Grace and works, in the point of righteousness before God, are perfectly opposite; "You are saved by grace," saith the apostle, "not of works, lest any man should boast," (Eph. ii. 8, 9).

2dly, Let us bring this matter into practice, and you will find that all men express this in their frame; both the self-righteous man, and he that is not so. Not only is it asserted in point of doctrine, that works and grace are thus inconsistent, but we always find it, even in the spirit and temper, both of the one and of the other.

1. He that seeks righteousness by the law, is a man that never saw his need of grace: and you may be well assured that that man will frustrate the grace of God, who never saw his utter need of it. He was never so far emptied, but he expects and imagines that he shall be able to work out a righteousness for himself, and so is not brought under any conviction of his utter need of the grace of God; whereas he that is for the grace of God in Christ alone, is a man that hath a great need of the grace of God, and sees himself undone without it.

2. This self-righteous man sees no glory in the grace of God shining through the righteousness of Christ; there is no excellency in it to him. Every natural man is in this mind; he sees a great deal of glory in his own doings: in a beautiful conversation, in brave gifts, and in a shining walk before men; he sees a great deal of beauty and glory here. Every natural man thinks there is a great deal of glory in his own performances. The self-righteous Pharisee came boasting in his own performances; "God, I thank

thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I possess," (Luke xviii. 11, 12). These were great things in the man's esteem, and so they are in the eyes of every natural man. But for that righteousness that is lodged in Christ, that is wrought out by a man without him, by one that came down from heaven, and is gone up thither again; that hath all this righteousness seated in him, and gives it forth to us by mere grace; no natural man thinks any thing of this. But the believer is a man that hath an high esteem of the righteousness of Christ. How doth the apostle Paul speak of this? "I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having on mine own righteousness," (Phil. iii. 8, 9).

3. Every natural man is averse from the grace of God, and therefore he must needs frustrate the grace of God. He is averse from it: but every believer is just of another mind. Sirs, if all men's hearts were known to us, as they are to God, here is one thing that would determine every man's state, What way do you best like to go to heaven in? "I would fain be very holy," saith the poor man, "that I may be very happy when I die." Saith the believer, "I would fain be clothed with Christ's righteousness, and get eternal life as the gift of his grace; and I know that by being in Christ I shall be sanctified." But no believer seeks sanctification as his righteousness, and title to glory: it is a preparation for glory, and the way that leads to glory, to all them that are saved according to that blessed method, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified," (Rom. viii. 30); and by glorification there, both sanctification and eternal

life are well understood by most.—So much for the third doctrine, That seeking righteousness by the works of the law frustrates the grace of God.

I would now speak a few words to the fourth doctrine, and then make some application of both together.

Doctrine 4. No true believer in Jesus Christ can frustrate the grace of God. The apostle is here speaking of it in the account that he is giving of the grace of God working in him: "I through the law," saith he, "am dead to the law, that I might live to God;" and "I live by Christ, and by faith in him, and, therefore, I do not frustrate the grace of God." He is not speaking of the great attainment that some few Christians arrive at; but he is speaking of that which is common to the state of all Christians: "I do not frustrate the grace of God." Before I come to the proof of this, I would lay down a few cautions, to prevent mistakes.

1*st*, It must be allowed that a great many who have been made Christians have been long enemies to the grace of God; and there is not a greater instance of this than the good man that speaks in my text, the apostle Paul. He was a great heart-enemy to Jesus Christ; and he was an enemy to Christ, if I may so say, with a good conscience, according to the real light that the poor man's blinded conscience had: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," (Acts xxvi. 9). "I never heard a name that I hated so much as the name of this Jesus of Nazareth; and I hated it from the heart, and my conscience prompted me to it." When our Lord met him by the way, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" little did the poor man think Christ died for

him, and should be a blessed fountain of life to him. A believer may be a great enemy to the grace of God, before the grace of God makes him a believer.

*2dly*, It may not be denied but that a true believer may take in doctrines contrary to the grace of Christ in their tendency, though he perceive it not. I should be loath to think that all these Galatians, that are here so sharply reproved by the apostle Paul, were rotten-hearted people; there might be many sincere people amongst them, imposed upon by the cunning of them that lay in wait to deceive. There may be, through darkness, perplexed heads in many honest hearts, about several points concerning the grace of God. It is not for us to measure any body's state according to the principles that they profess, unless they be very bad.

*3dly*, It is not to be denied but that in a fit of temptation, even a true believer may abuse the grace of God; he may turn it into wantonness, and may grow light and vain, because of his mistaking the nature of the grace of God. Several have done so, and God knows how to tame them that do so; and the severest fatherly rebukes of the law are upon them that wax wanton because of his kindness. These things being premised, I would briefly shew how it is that a good man cannot frustrate the grace of God.

1. Because good men are all grace's captives. Every believer, as a believer, and when he is made a believer, is made a captive of the grace of God. How are men saved, think you? We cannot see which way they are saved; the word goeth forth, and people hear it; but we do not know who gets good, and when they get good by it. I will tell you when men are saved; when the grace of God comes and

lays hold of them, and claps hold of a poor sinner—"This man shall be my captive, and I will save him." All believers are captives to the grace of God, and, therefore, they cannot frustrate the grace of God; they are all subdued by this grace, and made "willing in the day of his power." (Psalm cx. 3).

2. No believer can frustrate the grace of God, because he is dead to the law, as the apostle's word is in the context, (Gal. ii. 19). And there are two things needful to make a man dead to the law;—to know the law, and to know himself: and whosoever knows both these, is a man dead to the law. He that knows the purity, and the spotlessness of the law of God, and he that knows his own heart, and its vileness, this man will natively draw this conclusion, "Surely this law can never do me any good. I can never fulfil it, and it can never save me; if there be not another way of salvation than by the law, I am gone for evermore." "I through the law am dead to the law," saith the apostle; "I need no more, to make me despair of life by the law, than to see the law: it commands what I cannot do, it threatens what I cannot avoid nor bear; and therefore, I am dead to the law, that I might live to God;"—"my life must come in another way than by the law."

So much shall serve for the opening of these truths. It would now follow to make some Application; which I shall do in two things, respecting all the doctrines that I have raised from this former part of the verse. By these doctrines here delivered by the apostle, you are called to try the spirits, to try the doctrines you hear, and you are called to try your own state; for every doctrine that is contrary to the

grace of God is a doctrine that Christians should hate. And your eternal state is to be determined by these things—What are your heart-thoughts of the law of God? What are your heart-thoughts of the righteousness of Christ? And what are your heart-thoughts of the grace of God? And every one that knows truly what his inward sense of these things is, may soon come to some conclusion concerning his spiritual state: but I shall speak more fully to these things the next opportunity.

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## SERMON IV.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain."—Gal. II. 21.

FROM this first argument of the apostle for the justifying of a sinner through the righteousness of Christ, and not by the righteousness of the law, I have raised, and opened, and spoke something to four doctrines :—

1*st*, That the grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner through the righteousness of Christ.

2*dly*, That it is a dreadful sin to frustrate the grace of God.

3*dly*, That all who seek righteousness by the law, they do frustrate the grace of God.

4*thly*, That no true sound believer can be guilty of this sin. Frustrating the grace of God is a sin that no believer can commit.

I would now come to make some application of

these, which I mean to prosecute from these two heads:—

I. To warn you to take heed and to try the spirits, as the apostle exhorts (1 John iv. 1), according to this doctrine.

II. Try your own state according to your heart-thoughts of this matter.

I. You are to try the spirits—you are to try the doctrines that you hear. When the greatest measure of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the churches, and when extraordinary officers were raised up amongst them, and in a time when some of the apostles were living, by one of them was this exhortation given, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," (1 John iv. 1). And it is very observable, that the scope of that text that the apostle there lays down, leads us plainly to the doctrine that I am upon, "Believe not every spirit, for there are many false spirits, and antichrists, that are gone out into the world." But you will say, How shall we know them? Saith the apostle, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God" (ver. 3). Now, by a very usual phrase that was well understood then, and it is not hard to be known now, by "spirit," doctrine is meant. Every doctrine that tends not this way is not of God. Aye, but, you will say, Where are there any that say Christ is not come in the flesh, save the Jews? The apostle seems to make this a grand mark of antichrist. Now, in antichrist's kingdom (and that is a fitter name for them than that of the Church, for

with the church they have nothing to do) it is every where asserted that Christ is come in the flesh; for they have made a great part of their religion to consist in carnal, wicked representations of Jesus Christ; they have made a goddess of his mother, and they have made a puppet-show of his life and death, by their ridiculous representations. Aye, but the main thing that Christ came into the flesh for, that is forgotten by them; and of this the apostle speaks (ver. 10), "He hath sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Christ's business in this world was to be made a sacrifice for sin; and they that do not hold him forth as a sacrifice for sin, do, in effect, say he is not come in the flesh. Now, concerning these doctrines that I would warn you against, I would branch them forth into a few heads.

1. There are doctrines darkening the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ, that you should beware of. The gospel is called by the apostle, "the gospel of the grace of God," twice in one discourse to the church at Ephesus (iii. 2, 7); and the "word of his grace," (Acts xx. 32). What judgment then should Christians make of such men's spirits, that are called ministers, and will be called so, and yet you may hear them preach from one end of the year to another, and never hear a word of the grace of God, or the righteousness of Christ? If they be sound in the faith, it is well; but the very concealing of these things is a great sin, and a great snare to people; the very name of the gospel is the gospel of the grace of God: it is miscalled by the name of the gospel, if the grace of God runs not through every vein of it.

2. There are doctrines perplexing the grace of God; they make it dark, and they make it intricate: they

perplex the doctrine with methods, and they perplex people's consciences with their doctrine. There is no church canon in all the world that is much worth regarding, but that which we have in Acts xv.; for those that were called by the name of General Councils, for the first three hundred years after Christ, have many weaknesses and follies in them; and they began to savour of a begun degeneracy, though in the main points of the truths of the gospel they remained sound. In Acts xv. 1, certain men that came down from Judea had taken up this conceit, and "taught the brethren, that except they were circumcised after the law of Moses, they could not be saved." Observe where they laid the stress of this thing, "except ye be circumcised after the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." You know very well, that the apostle Paul looked upon circumcision as a very indifferent thing: sometimes, in his travels, he ordered some to be circumcised, but at other times he would not; he looked upon it as a matter of indifference, for the avoiding of scandals, and so the apostle reckoned it no great matter: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing." Aye, but when once it came to be broached into a doctrine, and a necessity laid upon it, "Except ye be circumcised after the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved,"—let us see what this awful reverend assembly at Jerusalem say to it; the apostles, and elders, and brethren, a blessed company they were, a blessed church, worth all the churches in England, without any reflection: "Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying you must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment,"

(Ver. 24): they trouble you, and they pervert your soul. Sirs, There are four questions, that must always be preserved plain; plainly delivered, and plainly known by all good men:—1st, What is that righteousness in which a sinner can stand safe before God? The plain answer to it is, That it is the righteousness of Christ only. 2dly, How come we by this righteousness? The gospel answer is, By grace alone; it is given us as a free gift, we do not buy it. 3dly, How are we possessed of this righteousness? By faith alone; there is no putting on this raiment but by faith alone. 4thly, What warrant hath a man to believe on Jesus Christ? The plain gospel answer is, Only the promise of the gospel. And here are two things I would caution you about, and the most part of people's mistakes lie about them. 1st, The law is no gospel but as it leads to Christ; the law not leading to Christ is against the gospel, and the gospel against the law; but the law leading to Christ serves the gospel, and the gospel serves the law by fulfilling it. 2dly, The doctrine of holiness, as it flows from Christ, is gospel; but the doctrine of holiness, without Christ, is no gospel. To make this plain: Whosoever they be that teach people to be holy, and tell them how they may be holy, and urge them very hard that they must be very holy, for this end, that when they are holy they may believe on Jesus Christ; these people pervert and perplex the gospel: but if people be persuaded of the necessity of holiness for salvation, and that they must believe on Jesus Christ that they may be holy, this is gospel. That is the second thing: Have a care of those doctrines that perplex and confound the truths of the gospel.

3. There are mixing doctrines: they that would mix something with the grace of God. The grace of God they will not disown, the righteousness of Christ they will not deny; but they will put something in with them in the matter of justification. Take heed of this matter; it is a shame that this should be talked on as a matter of controversy; it is a point that every one's conscience should be fully satisfied in, as they expect salvation from the hand of God. Indeed, good men may jar and jangle about terms that neither of them well understand; but when the matter comes to a particular person's own case, there should be a full satisfaction in this point —that the righteousness of Christ for our justification must stand pure and unmixed. It is a corrupt thing to mix any of the works of the law with the grace of God; and herein lay the error of the Galatians: the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ, they liked very well; but they would join the law of Moses therewith. Let the law of Moses keep its own place, and be the rule of our sanctification; but in our justification, it hath no room at all. God never gave it any room there, and all they are fools that do: it never served any man that way.

4. There are blaspheming doctrines, opposing and blaspheming the grace of God; and the land is full of them. You may have heard of a sort of people, the Socinians, and they are gross enemies to the grace of God. These strike at the very root of the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ. If Christ be not the true God, how can he save a sinner? It is impossible that the righteousness of a creature can atone for the unrighteousness of a creature. It is the Godhead of Christ that adds that infinite

virtue to his sacrifice that we are saved by. So much for this first exhortation, "Try the spirits."

II. I would exhort you to try your own state by this doctrine, "I do not frustrate the grace of God;" and as this hath been handled, it calls you to try yourselves about three things:—1st, What are your real thoughts of God's law? 2dly, What are your real thoughts of Christ's righteousness? 3dly, What are your real thoughts of the grace of God? A little to each of these.

*First*, What are your real thoughts of God's law? —And although you may think this a remote-like mark, yet it is not so remote but it comes near to the point: judgment will be made of a man's state before God, according to his real thoughts of the law of God. Good men have always great and high thoughts of God's law, and they have low thoughts of themselves: "I esteem all thy precepts concerning every thing to be right, and I hate every false way," (Psalm cxix. 128). "The law is holy; the commandment is holy, just, and good: the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin, (Rom. vii. 12, 14). But you will say, "Does not every body think so of the law of God?" I answer, No. No natural man hath a good thought of the law of God. Every corrupt, unrenewed man hath one of these three thoughts concerning the law of God:—

1. The natural man thinks the law of God easy to be kept. It is a graceless proverb that some people have in their mouths sometimes, and it flows from the corruption of their hearts, "That it is an easier thing to please God than it is to please man." Indeed, if they would take God's way, it is an easy

thing to get his favour; but, according to the sense that it is commonly spoken in, it is a wicked saying and flows from this wicked meaning,—that the natural man thinks the law of God easy to be kept, and thereupon the Scribes and Pharisees (and so do all that seek righteousness by the law), they expound the law of God so largely that one would think any body might keep it. Therefore, when our Lord hath a mind to break down this fortress of self-righteousness, he explains the law of God in its true strictness. The Pharisees' doctrine was, that nobody broke the sixth commandment but he that murdered a man; that no man broke the seventh commandment, but he that committed adultery with his neighbour's wife; that nobody broke the ninth but he that foreswore himself: and, indeed, if this had been all the interpretation of the law of God, that part of it that concerns our duty towards man had been no hard thing. Blessed be God, a great many good people, and bad people too, have not been guilty of these gross transgressions; but when the spiritual meaning of the law comes to be considered, who is innocent? "I had not known lust," saith the apostle, "unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," (Rom. vii. 7). "The commandment came to me in another sense, with that brightness that soon convinced me of sin." This is the first thought that people have of the law of God,—that it is easy to be kept.

2. When they are beat from this, and they find the law of God to be so strict a rule that it reaches to the word, and thoughts, and heart, to the least motion either from within or without, then they begin to hope that the threatening will not be fulfilled: if God gives so severe a law, that reaches to all, even

to the least sins, then they hope God will not punish every sin with the curse of the law. The Lord, by Moses, warns the people of this, "And it come to pass, when he hears the words of this curse, that he shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," (Deut. xxix. 19). The secure man is very unwilling to take up the holiness and the strictness of the law of God as forbidding every sin; but he is far more unwilling to believe that God means to execute the threatened vengeance for these sins. And what sorry pleas have they? "God is merciful." Aye, so he is, but not to them that despise his law. God is not merciful to any law-breaker; but God is merciful in providing a law-keeper to save us; but he hath no mercy for the law-breaker. If a man expects life by the law, he must die by it. "Aye, but Christ hath died for sinners;" and so he hath; but Christ was sent to fulfil the law, and not to take it away. Christ came not to make the law of God less strict in commanding than it was, nor less severe in threatening; but Christ came to take both upon his own back, and all that believe in him shall be saved from both. Christ took not away the law, but fulfilled it; and it is the reckoning of that fulfilling of the law by Christ to us, that is our salvation; and thus "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us." The righteousness of the law was fulfilled by Christ, and this is reckoned to a believer; and so the righteousness of the law of God is fulfilled in him; fulfilled by Christ, and so fulfilled in the believer in him.

But now suppose the light of the word drives a man from both these vain imaginations, and he sees

the law to be so holy that no man can escape its threatenings; when the natural man is thus beat from these two, then,

3. He rises up in rebellion against the law, and blasphemes the law of God. Sirs, there are a great many poor creatures that complain grievously that many blasphemous thoughts follow them: I do believe that next unto the advantage that Satan may have over some bad-tempered minds, and ill-disposed bodies, I am apt to believe that the main root of all these blasphemies, is this point of doctrine that I am upon. When the poor creature was secure, he thought he could easily fulfil the law of God, or avoid the curse of it; but when he comes to see both these to be in vain, then, unless grace subdues the man's heart, it naturally rises in rebellion against the law of God. "Why did God give such a strict law, that nobody can keep, but every one must be destroyed by it?" These very thoughts arose in Paul's mind: "Was then that which was good made death to me? God forbid," (Rom. vii. 13). The apostle Paul never knew himself to be a sinner till the law came; and the more close the law came, it slew him the more, and quickened sin in him more. Now, how can any one think well of that law that slays the sinner, and enlivens the sin? "God forbid," saith the apostle, "that I should say this was the end for which the law was made; but this was a blessed end in Christ's hand:" "By the commandment, sin appeared to be exceeding sinful," that Paul might see his exceeding need of a Saviour. And there are two things that raise these rebellious thoughts against the law of God.

1. When clear light about the law shines upon

the man's conscience, then all the Babel-building of their own works are thrown unto the ground: their praying, reading, hearing, holiness, it is all thrown to the ground by the law of God;—the law condemns them utterly in point of righteousness. The law indeed commands them in point of practice, and it commends them as things pleasing to God; but in point of righteousness before God, the law condemns them utterly; the only language of the law is this, "Do all, and live; fail in the least, and die:"—and thus the man sees all his own righteousness is gone. And how unwilling are people to yield to this? What a great matter is it for a man to be able to do so? When a poor awakened sinner, that never knew the grace of God, or the righteousness of Christ, when he hath by the force of good education, or the power of the word, been brought under some conviction of sin and duty, he then sets about praying, and reading, and hearing, and reforming, and, it may be, hath been doing something at this for several years; but in the mean time was an utter stranger to Jesus Christ. Now what a great matter is it for a man to forego all this, as if it had no worth in it? But why should not a man be willing to part with it? "I count it all but dross and dung," saith the apostle, "that I may win Christ," (Phil. iii. 8). This blasphemous frame is expressed in Ezek. xxxiii. 10, and it hath reference to the point that I am upon: "Therefore, O thou Son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we live?" The meaning is this: "The Lord is here, by his severe prophet, plaguing us with reproofs from the word of God for our sins,

and the execution of God's threatenings are upon us in his judgments; now if we be sinners, and God deals thus severely with us, what shall come on us?" Saith the Lord, (ver. 11), "There is a way of escape, 'Turn and live;' but have a care you do not trust to your own righteousness: for if you do, you are gone for good and all." Ver. 13, "When I say to the righteous, he shall surely live, if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed he shall die for it."

2. When the sinner once finds that he is forced to forego all that he hath got already, he then also sees that there are no hopes for the time to come; that he hath no hopes at all of a righteousness by the law; and this the poor sinner reckons like the putting him into hell: he is as sorry to part with the rotten props of his own righteousness, as if the taking it away was the casting him into hell; when it is the only way to save him from it. No man can be a believer on Jesus Christ, but he that despairs of righteousness by his own doings. This is the first thing I would have you examine yourselves about, What are your secret thoughts of the law of God? There is no righteousness can come by it; and that is the excellency of the law; it is none of the law's fault, but its glory, that no righteousness can come by it: it is a rule of righteousness, but it is no means to confer righteousness upon a sinner. The law can give eternal life to a sinless man; but it can give no life to a sinner: "If there had been a law that could have given life, verily," saith the apostle, "righteousness should have been by the law," (Gal. iii. 21); righteousness should certainly have come that way.

*2dly,* Try what your thoughts are of the righteousness of Christ. By the righteousness of Christ, I do not mean his divine excellency, as he is the Son of God, equal with the Father; nor the excellency of the man Christ Jesus, on whom the Spirit was poured forth without measure: but I mean, that righteousness that this God-man wrought out for us, as our Redeemer, for our justification, by his life and death; this is called the righteousness of God, (Rom. x. 3). And every one may know his state towards God by his thoughts of this:—every despiser of it is a stranger to God, and every spiritual admirer of it is a man acquainted with God.

1. The believer hath high and esteeming thoughts of it, as an only righteousness, and as a very glorious one. Let us compare a little what righteousness there is, has been, or can be. The first righteousness lasted but a little while; that of the first Adam and Eve; it may be, it was not a day old; however, it was a very short one. Now, there is no comparison between Christ's righteousness and this: it is true that this comes the nearest to it; and the apostle Paul takes notice of this parallel, (Rom. v.) The first Adam stood in the room of all his posterity, and they all stood in him, and with him as long as he stood; and this was a pretty glorious obedience that the first man performed, and if he had continued in it the time of his trial, it was to have been reckoned for the benefit of all his posterity; but it was but the righteousness of a man; it was but the righteousness of a creature; it was a righteousness that would have continued happiness, but it could bring no happiness to them that had once lost it. If such a thing could have been ima-

ginable, that the first Adam had stood, and one of his posterity had fallen, the first original righteousness would never have been able to have obtained pardon for that sinning offspring of Adam. But the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is that which brings in a pardon, and a title to eternal life, to them that had forfeited all. There is another righteousness, a little one, hardly worth that name, that is performed by believers, in obedience to the holy law of God; but this comes no way near to it. If we may speak of the righteousness of the law, that is in hell. There are some poor creatures that do not imagine what hell is; they think it is the place that in all God's creation may be best spared; but let me tell you, hell is as useful a place as any:—it is there where the righteousness of the law is proclaimed; every lash that is there given by the justice of God to the damned, proclaims aloud the righteousness and the holiness of the law. But I hope none will make any comparison between that righteousness that the law squeezes from the damned by their punishment, and that righteousness that the law found in Christ when it bruised him for our iniquities. Every believer hath high thoughts of this righteousness of Christ.

2. And not only so, but every believer hath venturing thoughts on this righteousness of Christ: the man not only thinks highly of it, but he builds upon it, and betakes himself to it. The righteousness of Christ is like a curious ark or ship, whereby all that are embarked in it, shall be safely landed in heaven. Now it signifies nothing for a poor man to stand upon the shore, and to commend the ship, and say it is a brave vessel; he must get into it; if ever he

hath a mind to escape the destruction of the world, he must get into the ark, Christ. The apostle hath an elegant similitude, "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house: by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," (Heb. xi. 7). Pray observe, the state of Noah and every man's state by nature are alike. God tells Noah, "An hundred and twenty years hence I will drown this whole world; and not a man, nor beast, nor fowl of heaven shall escape." Sirs, it is not so long, by one half almost, to that time when we shall all be in eternity! An hundred and twenty years was but a small time to them, who lived seven or eight hundred years. We are just in the same case: warning is given us by the course of nature, and by the word, that in a few years more we may be all turned out of this world; and our dying is of equal importance, as to our eternal state, with Christ's coming: what difference is there if thou shouldst die this week, or if Christ should come to judge the world this week? Thy eternal state is equally concerned in both. Now, God tells Noah, "I have provided an ark for thee: I will drown the whole world; but I will provide an ark for thee." But after the man had builded it, he must get into it, or he could not be saved by it. Now, here comes in the tidings of the gospel; we are not bid to prepare an ark, but we are told that God hath already prepared an ark, his own Son, who was hewed and framed by the justice of God, that he might be made a fit lodging for poor sinners. Now, the work of all them that would be saved, is to get into Jesus Christ, and to betake themselves to this

righteousness, and when they have done so, to rest quietly there. But yet this righteousness of Christ, as much as it is, and should be, spoken of in the preaching of the word, yet multitudes of professors never once thought of it; they often think we must be holy, and that Turks understand as well as you; but pray, how do you think to come by your holiness? Without righteousness? Never man shall be holy without the reckoning of Christ's righteousness to him; without which you can never partake of Christ's Spirit to sanctify you. This seeking, and studying, and framing a holiness, without employing Christ, doth these two things:—it dishonours Christ utterly;—and it renders holiness altogether impossible. It is utterly impossible there should be a spark of true holiness in that heart that is a stranger to faith in Christ Jesus. Morality and Pagan civility there may be; but true gospel holiness is a blessed consequence of faith in Jesus Christ.

*3dly*, Try your state by your thoughts of the grace of God; what your thoughts of God's holy law are, and what your thoughts of your own righteousness are:—and then what your thoughts of the grace of God are. And wheresoever the grace of God is, there will be right thoughts of it framed in the heart; and they will be many, and serious, and very deep, and reverent; for the matter is very great. What greater thing can a man be exercised about than the grace of God towards great sinners? Oh, what a weighty subject is this for meditation! and this I dare say, that he that hath but few and mean thoughts about the grace of God, never had one dram of the grace of God in himself: for all the grace that is in believers is but as a little drop from this

great fountain; and wherever it is really communicated, the fountain from which it flows will be greatly admired. There are a few things concerning these thoughts that I would speak a little to.

1. See that your thoughts of the law, and of the grace of God, and of the righteousness of Christ, be such as are squared with the word of God:—we must think of these things as God hath spoken of them in his word: and not frame thoughts to ourselves, from our own imagination. What saith the word of God concerning the law, and the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of God appearing therein?

2. Let your thoughts of these things be such as you have when you are nearest to God. Pray take heed to this: all that are Christians, understand a little of this, what it is to be nearer to God one time than another. If you are true Christians you will know what this means; if you are not, this direction belongs not to you. There are some times when believers are nearer to God than at other times; and always, when a man is nearest to God, his thoughts of the things of God are best:—He would be a happy Christian that could always retain the same sentiments and sense of the things of God that he sometimes hath. When a person is near to God, and he hath lifted up upon him the light of his countenance; when the glory of God appears before the eyes of a man, what doth the man then think of the holy law of God, of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of God? Oh, there is nothing else that makes any considerable appearance in the eyes of a man at that time! I am very well persuaded that the most confident pleaders of the cause of self-right-

eousness, the men that plead most for being justified by the righteousness of the law, if God would but speak to them, and bring them near to himself, they would lay their hands upon their mouths and speak no more. "Behold I am vile," saith Job, "what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," (Job xl. 4, 5, and xlii. 5, 6).—Labour I say to retain the same impressions of these great things of God that you had when you were nearest to God.

3. Labour to have such thoughts of the law of God, and the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of God, as you find exercised souls have. Labour to entertain the same thoughts of these things, as you find the generality of exercised souls have. What a learned scholar saith of these things, is not so much to the purpose; for they may mistake in many things: but what is the current, general sense of all them on whose consciences God ever wrought; in whose consciences there is any light. What is the general sense that they all have of these things? Labour for that. Was there ever any Christian under the hand of the Spirit of God, that had any difference in this point? Never one in this world: they all forsake the law, and despair of life by it: they all commend the righteousness of Christ, and betake themselves to it: they all admire the grace of God, and venture their all upon it. Whatsoever difference there may be about this or the other ordinance, or in other lesser things, yet as to those things, in which the

very nature and heart of the new creature lies, there is no scruple at all about them.

4. Labour for such thoughts of these things as you know you must have, and will have when you come to die. Labour for such thoughts of the law of God, and of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of God, as you will have when you come to die. Dying thoughts are commonly the truest. When a man is launching into eternity; when the man hath, as it were, put one foot off from the shore of time, and is leaving this world—what a poor mean thing is this little cottage of self-righteousness? It is as nothing in the man's eyes; but that great palace of the righteousness of Christ, and the great tenor of free grace, in bestowing it on the unworthy—what a glorious thing doth it appear to be? Dying people do not use to brag of their lives and their great attainments: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," saith dying Stephen, (Acts vii. 59), "I am waiting for one good turn more from Christ. Now, I am dying, Lord, take my soul." "Although my house be not so with God," saith dying David, "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire," (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

5. Labour to have such thoughts of these things as all men will have, both good and bad, both on the right hand and on the left hand of the Judge, at that great day. The world will once be all of a mind, that is questionless: in the main things all believers are of one mind now; and in the main things all unbelievers are in one mind; and unbelievers reckon Christ crucified weakness and foolishness; and all believers reckon him the wisdom and the power of

God: but when the last day comes, they will be all of one mind exactly, both good and bad; they on the right hand, and they on the left hand too. If this question were to go round to all the miserable assembly at the Judge's left hand, What think you of the law of God?—"Oh! it is a holy, powerful, dreadful law," would they say; "we lie under it for evermore, and feel the lashes of it." What think you of the righteousness of Christ? "It is a safe garment, happy they that are clothed with it; we have refused it, and therefore we are destroyed." The despised grace of God is there precious to them. We use to say, "Truth is the daughter of time:" if I may reflect upon the words, "Truth is the daughter of eternity;" and this day of eternity will bring forth truth to all men, as to these three points:—The Holiness of the law of God—The Virtue of the righteousness of Christ—and, The Dominion of the grace of God. These are points that all the damned in hell, and all the glorified in heaven, will eternally have the same sentiments of; but with wonderful difference as to their share therein. The damned hear nothing but the curse of the law: but it is the happiness of the glorified in being delivered from it: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," (Rom. v. 21). The words just going before are, (ver. 20), "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." There are two great things that have filled this world:—there were but two men in it that are worth talking of—the first Adam and the second; and if you know these well, it is no great matter what you are ignorant of. The first Adam is the law; the second Adam is the gos-

pel: to the former belongs hell, and to the latter heaven. Now, these two great men brought in two great things:—the first man brought in that woful thing we call sin; and the second man brought in that brave thing we call grace: and both these are great principles. Sin reigns, and all that it reigns over it destroys; it reigns unto death: and grace reigns, and all it reigns over it saves; "Grace reigns unto eternal life, through righteousness, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

## SERMON V.

"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—
GAL. ii. 21.

"I DO not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." You have heard of the connection of this verse with the preceding part of the chapter; and of its relation to the scope of the apostle, and to that point of gospel doctrine that he is there proving; and that is, "That a man is not justified by the law, but by Christ, or by faith in him. And this verse contains two arguments, the first of which I have already spoken to, and finished. In the former part of the words, "I do not frustrate the grace of God," would the apostle say, "If I seek righteousness by the works of the law, I should frustrate the grace of God;" and from this I have spoken at some length to four points of doctrine.

*1st*, The grace of God shines gloriously in justifying a sinner by faith in Jesus Christ.

*2dly*, That it is a horrible sin to frustrate the grace of God.

*3dly*, That all who seek to be justified by the law, do frustrate the grace of God.

*4thly*, This is a sin that no godly man, no sound believer, can be guilty of; and this I observed from the apostle's saying, "I do not frustrate the grace of God." And this was spoken by him as he was a believer, and not as an extraordinary officer of the church.

I am now to enter upon the apostle's second argument, in the latter part of the words, "For if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." You may see, by the different character, that the word "come" is there added by our translators, to make the sense more smooth. According to the running of the word in the original, it is, "If righteousness by the law, the Christ is dead in vain."—If it be by the law, if it come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. There are implied and contained in these words two negatives, and two positives; and I would speak a little to each. The two negatives are these:—

I. That the righteousness that justifies a sinner comes not by the law.

II. That Christ died not in vain.

The two positives that are contained in the words are these:—

I. That if righteousness came by the law, then Christ died in vain.

II. That it is a horrible sin to make Christ's death to be in vain. And how a sinner can be guilty of it, you shall hear.

I. The first negative in the text is, That righteousness comes not by the law; and this is implied, when the apostle speaks of it, as a principle from whence so absurd a conclusion would follow: it is plainly intimated that righteousness comes not by the law, because the apostle saith, if it did do so, "Christ was dead in vain."

I would speak a little to this—that the righteousness of a sinner for justification before God, comes not by the law. There is nothing that a man doth according to the law, there is nothing that a man suffers according to the law, that can be his righteousness before God; and there is something of both these attempted by men, but both in vain. This I would prove, that no sinner can have righteousness by the law.

1. The law discovers sin, and that is the apostle's argument: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin;" (Rom. iii. 20). There is no sin in the law; but the knowledge of sin by the law, is the knowledge of a contrary by its contrary. The law is perfectly holy; but this strict rule discovers the crookedness that is in man's heart. By the law is the knowledge of sin," (Gal. iii. 11). But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." It was evident to Paul, and it is evident to believers, but it can never be evident to an unbeliever, that no man is justified by the law, or by the works of it.

2. No man can be justified by the law, because the law condemns every sin, and every sinner for every sin. The law of God is so strict, that it condemns every sin. Now, that which condemns, cannot

justify: for these two are contrary, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," (Gal. iii. 10). The apostle Paul was a bold divine; he spoke the truth of God boldly, and cared not what men thought of it. Had the apostle said, "As many as break the law, are under the curse," we would have thought that pretty tolerable; but saith he, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." Why so? Because their works are not perfect; for it is written, saith the apostle, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law curseth every one that cannot fulfil it; if a man could fulfil the whole law of God, and transgress but in one point, yet that one sin would be condemned by the law, and the sinner for it.

3. No man can be justified by the works of the law, because every man is a sinner: "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and that all the world may become guilty before God: therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin," (Rom. iii. 19, 20). The question that the apostle is there upon, is on this point, that is so great a point in the Christian religion, How shall a sinner be justified before God? It is not how a holy man may be justified;—it is not how a man that never sinned may be justified; but it is, How shall a *sinner* be justified? a man that is flesh be justified? Now, saith the apostle, there is no *flesh* justified in the sight of God.

4. The law knows no mercy. Mercy and grace belong to another court than the law: "The law

came by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," (John i. 17). Condemnation for sin belongs to the law, but justification from sin belongs to the gospel. The law hath nothing to do with the one, and the gospel hath nothing to do with the other. The law hath nothing to do to condemn them that the gospel absolves. But you will say, "Is not this a great fault in the law, that it cannot justify a man?" The apostle speaks some way like this in Heb. vii. 18, 19; though I do believe that the apostle there rather means the Old Testament dispensation, than this law, in its more general comprehensive sense, that I am now speaking of: "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh to God." This is a common thought arising in the hearts of men, "Is it not a fault in the law, that it cannot justify a man? Is it not a fault that the law can send men to hell, but not bring them to heaven?" I answer, No: It is the excellency of the law; not its fault, but its glory; for let us consider a little what the law doth about righteousness.

1st, The law discovers and reveals a perfect righteousness; there is no surer, no better rule of righteousness in this world, than the holy law of God: therefore, when our Lord is dealing with a poor carnal legalist, a puffed-up young man, that came to him, in great haste, with great zeal, running to him like a man that would be in heaven before any body else, "Good master, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Saith our Lord, "You know, no man can come to heaven, but he that is perfectly

righteous; now the only rule of perfect righteousness is the law of God; and seeing thou art in the vein for doing," "keep the commandments." The poor man, not knowing his own heart, nor the breadth of God's law, replies, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Saith our Lord, "I will prove thee a breaker of the law, and a gross one too;" "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; and follow me, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven." Not that a title to eternal life comes to any man by giving his estate to the poor; but our Lord hereby discovers the rottenness of the poor self-justiciary's heart, that the man quickly, before all the company, discovered that his estate was more valuable to him than eternal life. Our Lord would have him give an evident proof, that his heart was disengaged from the world, and then follow him, and he should be saved; but he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions, (Matt. xix. 16), There is a perfect rule of righteousness in the law of God, for the most perfect creature that ever was: for sinless Adam in his state of innocency. "The law of God is perfect:" so it is often called in the word of God.

2d, This righteousness that the law of God discovers, it also commands by its authority; all manner of righteousness is commanded by the law of God.

3d, All sin is threatened by the law of God; yea, the want of this righteousness which it commands, is threatened by the law.

4th, By the law, the promise of eternal life is made to the righteous; for the law of God, completely considered, hath the promise of eternal life to all the obeyers of it; but never man shall reach it, because

the righteousness of the law is impracticable; it requires that righteousness that no man can perform; and, therefore, what it promises no man can attain to. This the apostle calls the impossibility of the law: so it is in the original; we read it, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," (Rom viii. 3). The true reason why the law cannot give life, is because of the *flesh* of them that are under it; no man can fulfil the righteousness of the law, and therefore no man can attain to life by the law. So much for the *first* negative implied here, That no righteousness can come by the works of the law.

II. The other negative is this, That Christ died not in vain. Now, this word, in *vain*, respects two things:—1st, That is said to be done in vain which is needless. 2dly, That is said to be in vain, that is unprofitably done. Now, neither of these can be said of the death of Christ: there was great *need* of his dying, and great *good* came by his dying, and therefore he died not in vain.

1*st*, There was great *need* of Christ's dying, and that upon manifold respects; I will name a few.

1. In regard of the decree of God, there was a necessity of his dying; and this our Lord had in his eye, when he was come just upon the borders of dying: "Now is my soul troubled, What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour;" (John xii. 27),—where our Lord hath respect to the necessity of his dying, upon the account of the divine appointment.

2. It was necessary upon the account of the covenant between the Father and the Son: Christ promised

to die, and, therefore, he must be as good as his word :—" A body thou hast prepared me ; then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will) O God." And what was that will of God? *Dying* was his will, and the blessed *consequences* of it. (Heb. x. 5, 7).

3. It was needful upon the account of the scriptures; and this our Lord insists on frequently. The scriptures of the Old Testament foretold Christ's death : there were many predictions and prophecies of it; many types and shadows of it; therefore our Lord tells his disciples: "These are the words that I spake unto you, whilst I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me," (Luke xxiv, 44). And again, (ver. 46), " Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." There was a necessity of it for the fulfilling of the scriptures, and, therefore, our Lord rebuked Peter, when he offered to make a defence for his master: " How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 54). "Put up thy sword, man, this is no place for that work: the scriptures are fulfilling."

4. There was a necessity of Christ's death, for the salvation of his people. Their justification and their salvation were only brought about by the death of Jesus Christ.

*2dly*, And that leads me to the *second* head—Christ's death was not in vain: for there was great fruit and profit by it.

1. It brought in an everlasting righteousness, which should stand accepted before God: this is

what our Lord wrought out by his death, foretold by the prophet Daniel, "To bring in everlasting righteousness," (chap. ix. 24).

2. There was not only a righteousness brought in, but by Christ's death there was a purchase made; a purchase of grace and glory for his people. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ purchased great things for us, even all things that we enjoy. It did not indeed purchase the covenant of grace; for the covenant of grace sent Christ; but yet it purchased all the blessings of the covenant; for the grand condition of that covenant was, that Christ must buy all the good things contained in it by the price of his own blood.

3. Christ died not in vain, for his blood confirmed and sealed the charter: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins, drink ye all of it," (Matt. xxvi. 27, 28). Christ's death confirmed the covenant, and made it a testament, (Heb. ix. 15, 20).

4. Christ's death was not in vain, but for great profit: for thereby a way to heaven was made plain to believers, a patent way to heaven. How blessedly doth the apostle speak of this, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh," (Heb. x. 19, 20). The meaning is, his *flesh rent;* the consecrating of the way, was by rending the flesh of Jesus Christ. The righteousness that justifies us—the blessings that make us happy —the covenant that secures them—and the way to heaven, are all by the death of Jesus Christ:—and they are strangers to all these things, who do not

know that their way to them lies through this vail of the slain Son of God. So much for the two negatives.

*Secondly*, I am now to speak to the two positives in the words.

1. That if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain. I have told you that righteousness comes not by the law, and that Christ did not die in vain. Now, the apostle joins them together, and shews what a strange aspect they have one upon another. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." This is an inference that will necessarily follow, If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain, to work out righteousness;—if righteousness comes by the law, Christ's death was in vain in the main end of it, viz., to work out righteousness. My friends, I would have you consider this with yourselves, and this one thought may serve to rectify many mistakes:—Our Lord Jesus Christ did not die to make hard things easy, to make a hard way to heaven easy; but Christ died to make impossible things *certain*. He did not die to make it more easy to get to heaven than it was before; but he died to make *certain* a way to heaven, that was *impossible* before. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh," (Rom. viii. 3). And again, "If there had been a law that could have given righteousness, verily righteousness had been by the law;" (Gal. iii. 21). But because there was no law that could give righteousness to man, therefore Christ came to bring about that

which was altogether impossible. How unworthily do they think of Jesus Christ, and the grand concern of his death, that look upon it only as purchasing a new law, whereby men might come to heaven on easier terms than they could by the old! Christ came to purchase a new way to heaven: a way that none could make but he: a way without which none could ever have come to heaven:—and really (though I acknowledge that about things unrevealed, and about the secret things of God, men should be sober) that notion of the possibility of the salvation of the heathen, that never heard of Jesus Christ, is condemned in this text. If a Pagan that never heard of Christ, may be saved, then is Christ dead in vain. If the end that Christ died for, can be reached any other way, then certainly Christ died in vain. If the righteousness that Christ died for, could have been attained any other way; if the fulfilling of the law that Christ underwent, in order to this righteousness; if these could have been done any other way, Christ died in vain. But these things are not so.

2. The second positive is, That making Christ's death to be in vain, is a horrible sin. The apostle is here arguing from absurdities; and he argues from two of the greatest that can enter into the minds of men. "If you seek righteousness by the law, you frustrate the grace of God, and what a wretched creature is that! If you seek righteousness by the law, you make Christ's death in vain; and can you do anything worse, than to kick against the grace of God, and to make the death of Christ in vain?" These sins are very great. But you will say, Can any man make Christ's death in vain? No. No man, nor any devil neither, nor all the devils together, can

frustrate the virtue of Christ's death; it is above the reach of hell and earth. The devil, and the wicked world, thought to make Christ's life in vain, by putting him to death; to put an end to his doctrine, and life, and disciples, by killing him; and to put an end to all, by keeping him in the grave: but to make Christ's death in vain is utterly impossible; it is so certain, so reverend a transaction of divine Providence, contrived in so much wisdom, that its end must necessarily be reached. But, though no man can make Christ's death to be in vain really—yet,

1st, A man may make it in vain to *himself;* he may reduce himself into the same case as if Christ had never died. "Behold, I Paul, say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," (Gal. v. 2). A strange word! "Christ shall profit you nothing!" Was the apostle Paul a man that preached an unprofitable Christ? No; but you render him vain, if you seek righteousness by the law. (Ver. 4), "Christ is become of no effect to you; whosoever is justified by the law, is fallen from grace." A justified man by the law, there never was in this world; but the apostle speaks of it here as supposing the best; supposing they had got all that they could have devised, for their justification by the law, supposing that they had obeyed the law more perfectly than any sinner ever had done, saith the apostle, "This is all the benefit you would reap by it, Christ's righteousness would be of no effect to you." A man makes Christ's death to be in vain to himself, when he doth not lay hold of its power and virtue by faith.

2d, A man makes Christ's death to be in vain, by doing all that *he* can to make it so; though he doth

not do so in fact. And you will find this the rule of God's dealing; he measures men's wickedness, and judges of their actions, by the native design of them, though they never reach it. In all acts of dishonouring God, and rebellion against him, God deals with men according to their sinful *intentions* in these sins, though they fall far short of taking effect. A sinner, by his self-righteousness, cannot make Christ's death to be in vain; but he doth all that he can to make it so: and this is what the apostle means here when he saith, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "You do all that you can to make Christ's death in vain."

I should now come to speak something of the greatness of this sin, of making Christ's death in vain; of entertaining any principles or practices that have a tendency that way. But I cannot enter upon this now.

## SERMON VI.

"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—GAL. II. 21.

"I DO not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The most sacred things revealed to us in the word of God are these two—the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and they are joined close together. They are two things that all who have a mind to be saved must constantly have in their eye—the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and yet there are not a few that despise both—that frustrate the

one, and make the other in vain; and this charge the apostle lays upon an error that he is reproving the Galatian churches for, and that was, their seeking righteousness by the law, and the works of it. I have spoken unto these words, as containing two strong arguments against seeking of righteousness by the works of the law.

1st, That thereby the grace of God is frustrated.

2dly, That thereby Christ's death is made to be in vain; as far as the wickedness of man can do the one or the other.

Upon this second argument I was the last time, and spoke something to four notes that I drew from it; two of them negatives, and two of them positives.

1st, That there is no righteousness, for the justifying a sinner, that can come by the law. Never man got to heaven by the law: never a man got to heaven by his own good doings. All go to hell for their own evil doings; but no man, since sin came into the world, ever went to heaven by his own good doings. That I proved.

*2dly*, The other negative contained here is, That Christ hath not died in vain: for the apostle doth certainly imply that he did not die in vain, when he aggravates the sin of seeking righteousness by the law, as inferring so horrible an absurdity; for he is pointing forth the heinousness of this sin in very dreadful colours, on purpose to make it hated.

The two positive truths contained here are these:—

1. If there was any righteousness that could come by the law, Christ's death would be in vain. Christ had died in vain, if any man could have stood accepted before God without the virtue of his death.

The virtue of Christ's death was of efficacy for the rendering men accepted before God, even before he came into the world. The fathers, that died before Christ came, were saved by the same faith that believers on Christ were saved by, after he came. So saith the apostle, "But we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they," (Acts xv. 11); comparing the Old Testament and the New Testament dispensation together.

2. The second positive was this, That making Christ's death to be in vain was a great and horrible sin. I told you it was impossible to make it vain *really*, or to hinder any of its excellent fruits. As no man could hinder the solid causes of it, so no man can hinder the strong fruit of it: the fruit of the death of Christ is quite out of the reach of men or devils. When our Lord was in his humbled state, the devil could, upon permission, carry his body up to the pinnacle of the temple; but he had no power to hurt him. When he was in this world, one wicked disciple betrayed him, and the rest cowardly forsook him; his enemies prevailed against him in the hour and power of darkness, and took away his life; but for the fruit and virtue of his death, that is lodged higher than man can reach: yet men may make Christ's death to be in vain,

1*st*, To *themselves*. A poor creature that hath not faith in Christ, gets no more good of him than if Christ had never died, or if Christ's death had been in vain; than if he had never died, or had died to no purpose.

2*dly*, God will always reckon with men according to their design in sinning. All sin is a breaking of God's law; but yet God's law will not be broken, but

will break all the breakers of it. Sin is counted and charged as a dishonouring of God; and yet the Lord's honour is advanced in the ruin of the sinner.

I proceed now to shew you the dreadfulness of this sin, of doing any thing that hath a tendency to the making Christ's death to be in vain. I would, 1st, aggravate this sin in its just measures; and, 2dly, come to the application, and shew how common a sin this is. It is a great sin to make Christ's death in vain, in the way wherein it is practicable, and in that sense that the apostle here means.

*1st*, Let us consider God. Whensoever we are to take the just measure of any sin, we are to take it with respect to God. This is the grand aggravation of all sin, that it is against God. When David is confessing, with deep remorse, his vile sins of adultery and murder, which were sins against his neighbour, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," saith he, "and done this evil in thy sight," (Psalm li. 4). Now, let us consider what this sin doth with respect to God: and here we must take up some account of God, according to the gospel revelation of him; for as Jesus Christ is not revealed by the law, so neither is the sin of rendering his death to be in vain, aggravated by the law as it is by the discoveries made of God in the gospel. It is a sin against God the Father, and against God the Son, and against God the Holy Ghost.

To make this sin appear in its greatness, first it is against God the Father wofully. The greatest contrivance that ever the infinitely wise God had, for the glory of his name, was the working out of eternal redemption, by the death of his own Son, for a company of lost sinners. This is the chief of the ways of God: all things revealed of him, and of his

counsel, and of his purpose, and of his actions, are all but low in regard of this; all others are subservient to this act of Divine Providence: this is the chief of the ways of God. Let us see what treasures of his glory are concerned therein.

1. There is infinite wisdom in contriving a way that the understanding of angels and men could not find out, and when it is revealed it cannot be fully known. It is said concerning the angels, that they "desire to pry into those things:" into those things that the Spirit reveals, "concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," (1 Pet. i. 11, 12). Now, if the glorified angels in heaven be students of Jesus Christ, and of the glory of his sufferings, and of the glory that was the fruit thereof, how much more should men do so! There is a "manifold wisdom of God" that shines therein, and is perceived by and made known to them, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;" (Eph. iii. 10). Now, where the wisdom of God is so much concerned, judge you what a provocation it must needs be, when foolish man does all that may be to defeat this wisdom. "Christ as crucified," is called "the wisdom of God and power of God;" but unto poor ignorant man he is foolishness and weakness, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24).

2. In this way of saving us by the death of Christ, there is the great grace and mercy of God that he would magnify. Now, what a great sin must it be to count all this in vain? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life," (John iii. 16). "God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom. v. 8). And shall this love be so far despised, as that a man shall endeavour to make it be in vain?

3. This is a contrivance, also, for the magnifying the holy law of God. The Lord is so zealous for his law, that he will part with it for no man's sake. He will not abate an ace of the rigour of his law for the saving of the world; but he hath found out a way to give the law all its due, and yet to give the poor sinner all that he needs. This is marvellous: the law gets all the righteousness it demands, and the sinner gets all the justification he needs: the law shall be honoured, and justice shall be satisfied, and the sinner shall be saved, and not destroyed: "God is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus Christ," (Rom. iii. 26).

*2dly*, This sin is also aggravated, as it is against God the Son. Let us consider what Christ's death was: it was the greatest concernment of a divine person. It was a great deal better to say, all the martyrs died in vain: it were a far less sin to say, as the ungodly world doth, "That they threw away their lives, with their folly and preciseness, when they might have saved them with a word, or a bow, or a cringe, to the idols of the nations." It were a great sin to say so. You know how the apostle aggravates this as a great absurdity, as to the doctrine of the resurrection: "Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," (1 Cor. xv. 18). But that was a small matter, in regard of making Christ's death to be in vain, which was a special concern of a

divine person. The blood shed was the "blood of God," (Acts xx. 28). And can God's blood be shed in vain? It was the lowest step, and the crowning act of Christ's sufferings: all that went before would not serve. The low estate he was born in, and the manifold afflictions he lived in; his being seized on in the night with soldiers, and lanterns, as a thief; his being bound, his being scourged, his being nailed to the cross in torment—this will not do neither. The crowning and saving act of our Lord Jesus Christ was his dying. It was also the grand pledge of our Lord's love, the great discovery, the great proof of his love to his people. "He loved his church, and gave himself for it," (Eph. v. 25). "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," (Rev. i. 5). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend," that is, "A greater testimony of love than this can no man give, than to part with his life for them that he loves," (John xv. 13). Now, judge you what a great sin it must needs be for a man to lay an imputation of vanity, and unprofitableness, on this great pledge of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to say he died in vain?

*3dly*, This sin of charging Christ's death to be in vain, is a sin against the Holy Ghost; it is sinning against the Holy Ghost. We find concerning the Holy Ghost, that he framed that body that our Lord lived in, and died in; he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, (Matt. i. 20). Next, Christ was anointed by the Spirit without measure, which was our Lord's text at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," (Luke iv. 18): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." The Holy Ghost did assist

him, and witness to him, in his death and at his resurrection. And therefore, when Stephen was preaching Christ to Christ's murderers, he aggravates their sin by this, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Especially, this sin is greatest when the Holy Ghost is convicting men, by the law, of their vileness; and convincing men, by the gospel, of the relief that is offered by Christ Jesus; and a great many struggle against the Spirit of God in both these cases. It is a long while before the sinner yields to the conviction of the Spirit, that all things are naught within, and that there is nothing right in them; and it is as long, many times, before they yield to the Holy Ghost, in venturing their souls on Christ as a sufficient Saviour.—And thus you see how this sin is aggravated, as being against God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. But to come a little lower.

This sin of making Christ's death to be in vain, is a dreadful sin against *others* also. It is a sin against sinners, and against believers also. It is so far a sin against others, that every unbeliever, every stubborn refuser of life and salvation by Christ's death, doth, in a manner, teach all others to run on in the same way of destruction that he takes:—He that saith Christ died in vain, doth in a manner cut the throats of the whole world; for all that are saved, must be saved by the virtue of his death. It is also a great sin against believers. The apostle aggravates this in the case of scandal; and the scandal that the apostle there speaks of, was in the un-tender use of Christian liberty. You sin against Christ, and then you also "cause your weak brother

to perish, for whom Christ died," (1 Cor. viii. 11, 12). The word *perish* there, might well have been rendered in another English word that is less offensive: "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish," or rather, 'stumble and fall,' for whom Christ died, for when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." Now, the thing that I drive at is this; if the apostle thus aggravates the un-tender use of Christian liberty, without a due regard to the weakness of other Christians, that may be overthrown and hurt thereby, how much more must this sin be aggravated, of endeavouring to make Christ's death to be in vain? For,

1. This strikes at the foundation of the Christian's faith; for if a man hath any faith at all, it must be built on Christ's death; that you will make no question of: that faith which is not built on a dying Christ, is but a perilous dream: God awaken all from it that are in it! When the apostle is placing the foundation of his confidence, in that song of triumph, (Rom. viii. 33, 34), the very first word of it is, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is Christ that died."

2. This sin strikes against the foundation of all the Christian's peace and comfort. Not only is the believer's state secured by his faith in Jesus Christ; but his quiet, and the calm of his conscience, are maintained also the same way. If the virtue of the death of Christ be taken away, all the joy of believers goes with it; for it stands only in this. The death of Christ is of eternal virtue and value, and, therefore, the believer's joy springs up perpetually.

3. This sin strikes against all the praises of the

saints on earth, and of the glorified in heaven. To make Christ's death in vain, would drown all the music both of heaven and earth. No believer here could give any praise; and there would be no praises there. The song of Moses and the Lamb rises from this—the Lamb was slain; "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," (Rev. v. 12). They sing that praise eternally, because they eternally feel the virtue of his blood.

APPLICATION.—I come now to make some improvement of this point. If it be so dreadful a sin to make the death of Christ to be in vain, how fearful a thing is it, that yet this sin is so common? I know multitudes think themselves as free from it, as the Galatians, to whom Paul wrote, thought themselves free from the error he charges them with: but men's imaginations are no proof of their innocency. It is here charged upon them that they *were* guilty of it; otherwise they would not thus have been charged, by the Holy Ghost, with the sin of making Christ's death to be in vain, as much as man *can* do, and as to *themselves*. I will instance in a few things, as proofs of this:

1*st*, To begin with that instance in the text, of "seeking righteousness" by the law:—Whosever they be that seek righteousness by the law, these men make Christ's death to be in vain. If they do so, "Christ is become of no effect to them; Christ profits them nothing," (Gal. v. 2, 4). "But who are these," say you, "that seek righteousness by the law?" I might answer this question with another, Who doth not? Every body doth, in one measure or

another. Seeking righteousness by the law, is when a poor sinner thinks he can be able, some time or another, to do that which God will be gracious to him for: whether it be a work of the law, or a work of the gospel, it is all one for that; when a man thinks to do that for which God will accept him as a righteous man, and account him no more a sinner—this is one that makes Christ's death to be in vain: for if it were possible that any man could be righteous before God, by any thing that he could do, saith the apostle, "Christ is dead in vain."

2*dly*, All apostates from the Christian profession are chargeable with this sin of making Christ's death to be in vain; and there are not a few of them in the age we live in. They are so dreadfully painted forth in the word of God, that, if I may so say, their very picture hath scared many an honest heart; many honest-hearted believers have been scared dreadfully with seeing the picture of these apostates. It is said, "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame;" (Heb. vi. 6). "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. x. 29). These persons once made a profession that there was virtue in the blood of Christ; but now they are come to renounce it. I am truly afraid of this thing; it hath often come in my mind: we have a generation amongst us, that are plagues come from hell; men called DEISTS, which is nothing else but a new court word for an Atheist: and they that are called

Socinians, which is only a more civil word for a Turk; people who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but only a good man that died at Jerusalem. They believe not that Christ died for any other ends than to testify the truth of his doctrine, and to set us an example to suffer patiently for the truth. My thoughts are not only about the horror of this heresy, that all should tremble at but my real jealously is, that there are amongst them not a few that have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; that have come up to blaspheming the Spirit of God, and the blood of the everlasting Covenant, shed by the Son of God. The Spirit of God hath written their doom, and let the saints wait in fear and patience, till God execute it: for execute it he will, were their quality ever so high, their number ever so great, their wisdom and power ever so strong. They are combined against the Son of God, and he will be avenged upon them; and let the faith and prayer of the saints hasten it.

*3dly*, All that *seek not* righteousness, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, and his death, they are guilty of this sin, of thinking, and counting that Christ died in vain. All that do not seek eternal life by Christ, are guilty of this sin. And how many such poor creatures are there, that for as often as they have read the Bible, and for as often as they have heard the gospel preached, yet to this day they never saw any need of the death of Christ for themselves? They run away with a notion, that it was needful the Son of God should come into the world, and die for men; but they were never convinced of this, that it was simply needful for *thee*, and for *thy* salvation; that unless the Son of God had

come, and laid down his life for *thee*, thou couldst not be saved. Every man must be convinced of his *personal* need of Christ's death, that ever expects to get any good thereby.

4*thly*, A great many poor creatures never saw any glory in the death of Christ. I do acknowledge that the cross of Christ was the greatest and thickest vail upon his glory, when he was forsaken by his followers; when he was insulted over by his enemies; when heaven and earth forsook him, and hell was enlarged against him. What was more low than the man Christ when he died? Yet, notwithstanding, to a believer, the great beaming forth of the glory of God shined in the face of Christ crucified. Herein shined the manifold wisdom and grace of God. Every lash, in a manner, that the Father laid upon the Son, proclaimed aloud the love of the Father, that put him to that suffering, and the love of the Son that underwent it. The poor Jews were but sorry believers (John xi. 36): when they saw Christ weeping at Lazarus's grave (although I believe Christ wept not so much for Lazarus, as in contemplation of the common calamity of mankind, and it may be, this was the first grave that ever Christ was so near to in his life), "Behold," say they, "how he loved him!" Surely, then, Christ's cross should far more teach us to cry out, "Behold, how he loved his people!" than Lazarus's grave, and Christ's weeping over it, did the Jews, to say, "Behold, how he loved him!" Christ's dying for his people proclaimed his love to them indeed; but yet a great many see no glory in all this.

5*thly*, Many poor people have no business with Christ, about the virtue of his death; they have no employment for him about that thing, to have the

virtue of the death of Christ applied to them for their salvation. This is that the apostle was so mighty earnest for, but they have no thought, no understanding of it: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." What was this conformity to the death of Christ that Paul was here labouring for? Was it only wishing that he was a dead man? No, no; he would have, and find the virtue of Christ's death quickening him: raising him up, and saving him more and more.

I will tell you, there are some things about the grave of Christ that should make every believer's heart to be much about it, and to make us visit it daily by faith.

1. There the law is buried, there the old husband is laid that we can never be well till we are divorced from. The apostle tells us several things concerning this "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross," (Col. ii. 14, 15). There were few eyes so good as to be able to see the condemnation of the law nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ; to see sin condemned by him, as the word is (Rom. viii. 3), "He condemned sin in his flesh," being made a sacrifice for it. Therefore, when the apostle is, in the 7th chapter of the Romans, speaking of the difference between the law and the gospel—between a natural state and a believer's—he resembles it plainly to this, to the state of a woman that hath two husbands. The first husband was the law, and a dreadful one it was; no fruit was brought forth by that marriage but that which was unto death. Now, she must be sure that

this husband be dead before she can be lawfully married to Jesus Christ. "If whilst her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from the law; and so she is no adulteress, although she be married to another man." (Ver. 3).

2. In the grave of Christ, by faith, believers are to see that their sin is buried. Saith the apostle, "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Heb. ix. 26). "He put away sin:" he hath so far put it away, that it shall never rise up in judgment against any that the virtue of Christ's death is applied to: thereupon the apostle grounds his triumph on this, "It is Christ that died," therefore the believer cannot be condemned, (Rom. viii. 34).

3. In Christ's death there is a charter sealed by his blood. And how should believers be exercised in looking to Christ's death on this account? There are many seals to God's covenant: seals on God's part, and seals on our part. God puts to the seal of his word, and of his oath, and of the sacraments, and of manifold repeated promises; and believers they put to their seal of faith. "He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true;" (John iii. 33). But the best and greatest seal is Christ's death, confirming the covenant. "The covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ," saith the apostle, (Gal. iii. 17).

*Lastly*, To bring the charge of this sin yet more close, even believers themselves are not innocent of it: not only all that seek righteousness by the law—not only all apostates from the faith of the gospel—not only they that seek not righteousness and life by the virtue of Christ's death—but even believers

themselves, are guilty of this sin. There is something in *their* frame that saith, "Christ hath died in vain."

1. There is conscience of sin arises many times in believers. The apostle, speaking of the Old Testament administration, finds fault with it as defective upon this account, That it did not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. "They could not make the comers thereunto perfect; for then would not they have ceased to be offered; because that the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins;" (Heb. ix. 9 and x. 1, 2). Pray observe the scope of the apostle in both these chapters: he is there telling us what shadows the Jews had of that grand sacrifice that was to be offered by the true High Priest, Jesus Christ, in their daily, and weekly, and monthly sacrifices; but the greatest of all was in that grand sacrifice of atonement that was offered up once a-year. "Now," saith the apostle, "all these sacrifices do not make the comer thereunto perfect as to his conscience;" that is, "they did not deface all conscience of sin in the Israelite, but there was a secret fear still that their sin was yet in remembrance before God." And what is the argument with which the apostle proves that these sacrifices did not make the comers thereunto perfect? Saith the apostle, "It is proved by this, Because they were so often repeated." The daily sacrifice was repeated every day, and the weekly sacrifice every Sabbath day, and the monthly sacrifice every new moon, and the yearly sacrifice once a year, upon the seventh month. "Now," saith the apostle, "If these things could have made the comers thereunto perfect, they would not thus have

needed to have been repeated." And from this argument he concludes the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to quiet the conscience, and he also proves the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice to quiet the conscience by its oneness. "But this man," saith he, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God," (ver. 12); and again, "By one offering, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified," (ver. 14). The case lies plainly here: Every true believer, that hath acted faith on Jesus Christ distinctly, and hath lodged his eternal salvation, and his everlasting acceptance with God, on the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, this man chargeth Christ's death with being in vain, if conscience rise again, and he hearken to it. I know sin *will be*, and conscience *will* check for sin; but remember this, Christ died not in vain: the virtue of Christ's death remains still; it made that peace that no future transgressions shall be able to weaken or impair.

2. In the case of sanctification. Saith the poor believer, "The work of holiness and sanctification goes on slowly:" and truly so it doth; and we should see it, and bewail it greatly. Well, what then? Hath Christ died in vain? Christ's dying is sanctification: "For their sakes I sanctify myself," saith our Lord, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth," (John xvii. 19). "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," (Titus ii. 14). It were a great blessing if believers had but skill to draw, by faith, sanctifying virtue from the death of Jesus Christ. This is what the apostle is upon, Rom. vi. throughout. "How shall

we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" But how are believers dead to sin? Have they not sin living in them? "We are dead to sin in Christ," saith the apostle; "he died for sin, and he hath dominion over sin, and we reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ," (ver. 11).

3. There is weakness of faith in believers, as to the glory to come. Not only are there many qualms of conscience, and many defects in their holiness, but when believers think of the glory to come, and the great prize of their high calling, and see it great, and high, and far above them, the more they see of the glory of it, the more they see they are unworthy of it. "May such a vile wretch as I expect this great reward of eternal life?" Yes, for Christ bought it; he hath not died in vain. It will be best known at that day what Christ died for, and for whom: when all the kings that he hath bought, and all the crowns that he hath purchased for them, and all the kingdoms shall be seen, it will then be known Christ died not in vain. Every shaking of faith, as to any blessing that Christ's death purchased for his people, every shaking of that faith, hath this woful charge to be given in against it, that Christ then hath died in vain. Indeed, if the crown of life was to be enjoyed as a reward of thy works, it were a vain thing to expect it: if it were to come in as a reward for our performances, it were a dream to expect it: but, since it is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord—since Christ hath bought it—every believer should expect it: "As great as it is, as unworthy as I am; yet, notwithstanding, the confidence of faith should be maintained." Therefore, now, for the consolation of believers, labour by faith

to drink in these two things,—That righteousness comes not by the law, and that Christ hath not died in vain; and what strong consolation will they yield!

1. Righteousness comes not by the law; and there is great comfort in this. Righteousness comes not by the law, to any man *out of* Christ; and there is no condemnation comes by the law, to any man *in* Christ. If so be that men will give glory to God, and renounce their own righteousness, and all their expectations of relief that way, and betake themselves to God's device of salvation by Jesus Christ, and believe on him, as they can expect no good by the law, so they should fear no hurt by it; for, as sin hath made it impossible that the law of God should justify us, so the grace of God in Christ hath made it impossible that the law should condemn a believer in him. Therefore, saith the apostle, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Why so? "The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death: for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that God hath done by Jesus Christ, that so the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," (Rom. viii. 1, 2, 3, 4).

2. Feed also upon this by faith, That Christ died not in vain. There is nothing you can want, nothing that you can pray for, nothing that you can ask for in time, nor enjoy to eternity, but it is contained in this, "Christ died not in vain:" for Christ died to all those blessed purposes that are needful to make them happy for ever that are sharers therein. Whensoever you come to have any dealings in earnest with God about salvation, and your justification, and eternal life, always remember these two things,—

The grace of God, and Christ's death. The law hath nothing to do in this case; it cannot *help* you whilst you are under it, but condemn you: and if you be believers, the law cannot *hurt* you, for you shall be absolved; for this is a righteousness without the law, "But witnessed to by the law and the prophets," (Acts x. 43).

# SERMON

## ON

## BY WHAT MEANS MAY MINISTERS BEST WIN SOULS?

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."—1 TIMOTHY IV. 16.

THE words are a substantial part of the good counsel and direction the apostle giveth unto Timothy, and in him, unto all the ministers of the gospel.

In them are two things:

1. A threefold duty laid on gospel-ministers, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them."

2. A double advantage consequent upon the discharge of this duty: "For in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

*First,* Minister's duty is in three things here.

1st, "Take heed unto thyself." Thou art set in a high office, in a dangerous place; take good and narrow heed; look well to thyself, thy heart and way.

2d, "Take heed unto thy doctrine." Though thou be ever so well gifted, and approved both of God and men; though thou be an extraordinary officer, (as Timothy was); yet take heed unto thy doctrine. These two we pass at present; because we shall resume them at greater length, when we take their help to the resolving of this question.

3d, "Continue in them." This hath relation, it appears, unto ver. 12 and 15, as well as unto the preceding part of this verse. I shall dismiss this part of the verse with these:

1. Continue in thy work. Thou who art a minister, it is a work for thy lifetime; and not to be taken up and laid down again, according as it may best suit a man's carnal inclinations, and outward conveniences. The apostles that laboured with their hands, have, by that example, set the conscience of a minister at liberty, to provide for the necessities of this life by other employments, when he cannot live of the gospel; yet certainly no man that is called of God to this work, can with a safe conscience abandon it wholly. Paul, for example, rather than necessity, both preached, and wrought in a handicraft. As preaching doth not make working unlawful, so neither should any other business of a minister make preaching to cease.

2. Continue in endeavours after greater fitness for thy work. No attainments in fitness and qualifications for this work, can free a man of the obligation that lies on him to increase and grow therein more and more. It is not enough that a man study and be painful ere he enter into the ministry, but he must labour still to be more fit for his great work.

3. Continue in thy vigour, and painfulness, and diligence. Young ministers, that are sound and sincere before God, are usually warm and diligent in the first years of their ministry; and many do decline afterwards, and become more cold and remiss. This exhortation is a check thereunto, "Continue in them."

*Secondly*, The second thing in the word, is, the

double advantage proposed to encourage ministers to this hard duty.

1st, "Thou shalt save thyself." Thy own salvation shall be promoted and secured thereby.

How becoming is it for a minister to mind his own salvation! and to mind it so heartily, as to be animated from the hopes of it unto the greater diligence in his ministry!

But how doth faithfulness in the ministry of the gospel further the minister's salvation?

1. Faithfulness in a man's generation-work, is of great use and advantage to salvation. "Well done good and faithful servant," from the Lord's own mouth, is a great security; and diligence and faithfulness in improving the talents we are entrusted with, through grace, procure that testimony.

2. Thou shalt save thyself from the guilt of other men's sins and ruin, if thou be faithful in the ministry: (Ezek. xxxiii. 9.) "Thou hast delivered (or saved) thy soul," saith the Lord to the prophet in the case of unsuccessful faithfulness. So Paul (Acts xviii. 6), "I am clean, your blood be upon your own heads:" and (Acts xx. 26, 27), "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Every minister pledgeth his soul to God, that he shall be a faithful servant; and he that is such, may freely take up his stake, whatever his success on others be.

3. Faithfulness and painfulness in the ministry of the gospel, promotes a man's own salvation, in so far as the work of Christianity is woven in with the right discharge of the office of the ministry. Many ministers can say, that if they had not been ministers, they

had in all appearance lost their souls. The subject of the minister's work, is the same with that of a Christian's; and above all men should he be careful of his heart and intentions, that all be pure and spiritual. No man, in any work he is called to, is under so strict a necessity of dependence on the influence and assistance of the Holy Ghost, both for gifts and grace. And are not all these great helps unto our own salvation?

2d, The second advantage is, "Thou shalt save them that hear thee." There is little hope of that man's being useful to save others, that minds not his own salvation; and therefore the apostle puts them in this order, "thyself," and then, "them that hear thee."

This description of the people, "them that hear thee," saith, That the principal work of a minister is preaching; and the principal benefit people have by them, is to hear the Lord's word from them; though there be a *seeing* (that is, of their holy conversation) that is also useful, (Phil. iv. 9). But the apostle knew no such ministers as were only to be seen in worldly pomp and grandeur, and seldom or never heard preaching.

"Thou shalt save them:" The great end of both preaching and hearing, is salvation; and if salvation were more designed by preachers and hearers, it would be more frequently the effect of the action.

"Thou shalt save them." Thou shalt, by the rd's blessing on thy ministry, be successful in converting sinners, and in building up of saints in holiness and faith unto salvation. Not that ministers are of themselves able by all their endeavours to carry on this great end; they are only God's tools and instruments, (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7). Concerning this,

1. We find, that the Lord hath appointed this great ordinance of the gospel-ministry for this end, the saving of men, (Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13). It is through their word that men believe, (John xvii. 20). And divine appointment of the means, declares both it to be useful, and the end to be hopeful.

2. He hath also given many promises of his presence, blessing, and success, to follow and attend them whom he sends on this great errand. Christ's first calling of the apostles had this promise in it, "I will make you fishers of men:" which not only declared what that employment was he called them unto, but it assured them of success in it. At his leaving of them, he promised "to be with them unto the end of the world;" (Matt. xxviii. 20). And this promise is as good to us as it was to them.

3. He hath also revealed much of his mind about minister's duty, in order to this end of saving men. This also makes the end more hopeful.

4. We find, that the Lord doth qualify and fit them whom he makes successful. He makes men "able ministers of the New Testament," the word of life, (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). And still, according to the success the Lord hath a mind to bless a man with, gifts, and qualifications, and assistance, are proportionably given. The apostles, that had the greatest harvest to gather in, were made the strongest labourers; and, though in a far inferior degree, the same method is observed by the Lord in dealing with and by ordinary ministers. It is true, that always the most able and learned ministers are not most successful; yet, generally, the most skilful labourers are most blessed. Neither are the most learned and

able men for parts most fit and skilful in dealing with souls at all times.

Now, having opened the words, we shall return to the question to be resolved, "By what means may ministers best win souls?" In speaking to which, I shall,

1st, Shew what this text saith unto this purpose. And then,

2d, Give some further account thereof from other scriptures. And,

3d, Apply it both to ministers and people.

I. What this text speaks about this matter. It looks two ways upon this question. 1. It gives a direct answer unto it, and points forth duty. 2. It gives an encouraging promise of the good effect and fruit of the discharge of the duty. I shall carry on both together.

*First*, "Take heed unto thyself." Wouldst thou be a saved and successful minister? "Take heed unto thyself." Such warnings imply always a case of difficulty and danger wherein he is that gets them.

Take heed unto thyself in these things:

1. Take heed that thou be a sound and sincere believer. The importance of sincere godliness in a minister, is written in the deep wounds that the Church of Christ hath received by the hands of ungodly ministers. It hath been made a question, Whether an ungodly man can be a minister? but it is none, that such men are in a most desperate condition: "Depart from me; not because you ran unsent, or preached error instead of truth, or preached poorly and meanly, (all great sins in themselves); but because you work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23); the

usual expression of entire ungodliness. What use the Lord may make of the gifts (for great gifts he gives to the worst of men) of ungodly men, even in the ministry of the gospel, is one of his deep paths. But no man can reasonably imagine, that a walker in the way to hell can be a fit and useful guide to them that mind to go to heaven. If a man would have peace in his conscience, and success in his work of the ministry, let him take good heed to this, that he be a sound Christian. There is a special difficulty for a minister to know his grace. Gifts and grace have deceived many with their likeness; although the difference be great, both in itself, and to an enlightened eye.

2. Take heed to thyself, that thou be a called and sent minister. This is of great importance as to success. He that can say, "Lord, thou hast sent me;" may boldly add, "Lord, go with me, and bless me." It is good when a man is serious in this inquiry. It is to be feared that many run, and never ask this question: so is it seen in their speed and success. "I sent them not, therefore they shall not profit this people at all" (Jer. xxiii. 32), is a standing rule to this day.

These things, if found, may serve to satisfy a minister's conscience, that Jesus Christ hath sent him.

1st, If the heart be filled with a single desire after the great end of the ministry, the glory of God in the salvation of men. Every work that God calls a man to, he makes the end of it amiable. This desire sometimes attends men's first conversion. Paul was called to be a saint and an apostle at once, (Acts ix.); and so have many been called to be saints and ministers together. If it be not so, yet this is found with

him that Christ calls, that when he is most spiritual and serious, when his heart is most under the impressions of holiness, and he is nearest to God in communion with him; then are such desires after the serving of Jesus Christ in the ministry most powerful. And the sincerity of his desire is also to be examined: and when it is found, it adds greatly to a man's peace; when his heart bears him witness, that it is neither riches, nor honour, nor ease, nor the applause of men, that he seeks after, but singly Christ's honour in the saving of men.

2d, It helps to clear a man's call, that there hath been a conscientious diligence in all the means of attaining fitness for this great work. That love to the end that doth not direct and determine unto the use of the appointed means, may justly be suspected as irregular, and not flowing from the Holy Ghost. Even extraordinary officers seem not to have been above the use of ordinary means, (2 Tim. iv. 13); old dying Paul sends for his books and papers.

3d, A competent fitness for the work of the ministry, is another proof of a man's call to it. The Lord calls no man to a work for which he doth not qualify. Though a sincere humble man (as all ministers should be) may and should think little of any measure he hath, whether compared with the greater measures of others, or considered with regard unto the weight and worth of the work; yet there must be some confidence as to his competency, for clearing a man's call, (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). What this competency is, is not easy at all times to determine. Singular necessities of the church may extend or intend this matter of competent fitness. But in general there must be, 1. A competent knowledge of gospel-

mysteries. 2. A competent ability of utterance to the edifying of others. This is "aptness to teach," required of the apostle in 1 Tim. iii. 2, and Titus i. 9, that a minister be "able, by sound doctrine, to exhort and to convince gainsayers."

4th, The savour of a man's ministry on the hearts and consciences of others, both ministers and people, helps much to clear a man's call. So that indeed ordinarily a man can never be so well confirmed in the faith of his being called of God, until he make some essay in this work. Deacons must first be proved, (1 Tim. iii. 10); much more ministers. A single testimony given by ministers and Christians, that the word dispensed by the man is savoury, and hath effect on the conscience, is a great confirmation; especially, if sound conversion of some follow his labours. That is indeed a seal of his ministry, (2 Cor. iii. 3, and 1 Cor. ix. 2).

3. Take heed unto thyself, that thou be a lively thriving Christian. See that all thy religion run not in the channel of thy employment. It is found by experience, that as it fares with a minister in the frame of his heart, and thriving of the work of God in his soul, so doth it fare with his ministry both in its vigour and effects. A carnal frame, a dead heart, and a loose walk, make cold and unprofitable preaching. And how common is it for ministers to neglect their own vineyard? When we read the word, we read it as ministers, to know what we should teach, rather than what we should learn as Christians. Unless there be great heed taken, it will be found, that our ministry, and labour therein, may eat out the life of our Christianity. Not that there is any discord betwixt them; but rather a friendly harmony, when

each hath its place and respect. The honest believer meditates, that he may excite his grace; and ministers too often meditate only to increase their gifts. When we preach, the sincere hearer drinks in the word; and it may be we seldom mix faith with it, to grow thereby. Oh, how hard is it to be a minister and a Christian in some of these acts! We are still conversant about the things of God; it is our study all the week long. This is our great advantage. But take heed to thyself, lest ordinary meddling with divine things bring on an ordinary and indifferent impression of them; and then their fruit to thee, and thy benefit by them, is almost gone, and hardly recovered.

4. Take heed unto thyself in reference to all the trials and temptations thou mayest meet with. Be on your guard, "watch in all things, (2 Tim. iv. 5). No men are shot at more by Satan than ministers, and he triumphs not more over the foils of any than theirs. And Christ is liberal in his warnings of dangers, and in his promises of help in them.

*Secondly*, The second word in the text to this purpose of directing ministers how to be useful to others, is "Take heed unto thy doctrine." Art thou a minister? Thou must be a preacher. An unpreaching minister is a sort of contradiction. Yea, every sort of preaching is not enough; thou must take heed unto thy doctrine what it is.

Here is a warrant for studying what we are to teach, and what we have taught people. But the great matter is to take heed, or study aright. Students commonly need little direction about ordinary study. But concerning the doctrine, I shall entreat to take heed unto it in these things:—

1. Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be a divine truth: "Let a man speak as the oracles of God," (1 Pet. iv. 11). And therefore it is needful that ministers be well acquainted with the holy scriptures. It is a bad token of the temper of that man that relishes any book more than the word of God. The world is full of books written on pretence and design to explain the scriptures; and men's studies are full of them. There is also a blessing in them, and good use to be made of them; but also a bad use is made of them. Many ministers have found, that they have preached better, and to more profit to the people, when they got their sermon by meditation on the word, and prayer, than by turning over many authors. From this neglect of the word also come a great many doctrines, that are learned by man, and borrowed from philosophy; which though they may have some truth in them, yet since it is divine truth that a minister should bring forth to the people, he should not rest on such low things.

2. Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be plain, and suited to the capacity of the hearers. Learned preaching (as it is called) is a vanity, pleasing principally to such as neither design nor desire edification. True godly learning consists in preaching plainly, and therein is no small difficulty. Two things would help to plain preaching. 1. Clearness of knowledge. The alleged depth of our doctrine often proceeds from our own darkness. 2. Humility and self-denial. We must not seek ourselves, nor the applause of men, but God's glory and men's salvation. It is found that the holiest ministers preach most plainly, and the plainest preachers are most successful.

3. Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be grave, and solid, and weighty; "sound speech that cannot be condemned," (Tit. ii. 8). Deep and weighty impressions of the things of God upon a man's own heart would greatly advance this. A minister's spirit is known in the gravity or lightness of his doctrine.

II. But now we come to the second thing proposed, to give some answer to this question from other things in the word.

And I shall, 1. Shew some things that must be laid to heart about the end, the saving of souls; and then, 2. Shall give some advice about the means.

1. About the end, the winning of souls. This is to bring them to God. It is not to win them to us, or to engage them into a party, or to the espousal of some opinions and practices, supposing them to be never so right, and consonant to the word of God. But the winning of them is, to bring them out of nature into a state of grace, that they may be fitted for, and in due time admitted into everlasting glory.

Concerning which great end, these few things should be laid deeply to heart by all that would serve the Lord in being instrumental in preaching it.

1st, The exceeding height and excellency of this end is to be laid to heart. It is a wonder of condescendence, that the Lord will make use of men in promoting it. To be workers together with God in so great a business is no small honour. The great value of men's souls, the greatness of the misery they are delivered from, and of the happiness they are advanced to, with the manifold glory of God shining

in all, makes the work of saving men great and excellent. Preaching the gospel, and suffering for it, are services that angels are not employed in. Mean and low thoughts of the great end of the ministry, as they are dissonant from truth, are also great hindrances of due endeavours after the attaining the end.

2dly, The great difficulty of saving souls must be laid to heart. The difficulty is undoubted. To attempt it, is to offer violence to men's corrupt natures, and a storming of hell itself, whose captives all sinners are. Unless this difficulty be laid to heart, ministers will be confident of their own strength, and so miscarry, and be unfruitful. Whoever prospers in winning souls, is first convinced that it is the arm of Jehovah only can do the work.

3dly, The duty of winning souls must be laid to heart by ministers. That is their principal work, and they are under many commands to endeavour it. It is a fault to look on fruit only as a reward of endeavours; so it is indeed, and a gracious one: but it should be so minded as the end we would strive for, (Col. i. 28, 29); which, when attained, is still to his praise; yet most commonly when it is missing, it is to our reproach and danger, when it is (as, alas! it is often) through our default.

4thly, The great advantage there is to the labourer by his success, is to be pondered. Great is the gain by one soul. "He that winneth souls," is happy as well as "wise," (Prov. xi. 30, Dan. xii. 3). Won souls are a minister's "crown," and "glory," and "joy," (Phil. iv. 1, 1 Thess. ii. 20). How far is this account above all others that a man can give of his ministry? These things fixed upon the heart would

enliven us in all endeavours to attain this excellent end.

2. For advice about the means, I shall add these few, besides what hath been said.

1st, Let ministers, if they would win souls, procure and retain amongst the people a persuasion of their being sent of God; that they are "Christ's ministers," (1 Cor. iv. 1). It is not confident asserting of it, nor justifying the lawfulness of our ecclesiastical calling, though there be some use of these things at some times: but it is ability, painfulness, faithfulness, humility, and self-denial, and, in a word, conformity to our Lord Jesus in his ministry, that will constrain people to say and think that we are sent of God. Nicodemus comes with this impression of Christ, "A teacher come from God," (John iii. 2). It is certain that these thoughts in people further the reception of the gospel: "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus," (Gal. iv. 14).

2dly, Let ministers, if they would win souls, purchase and maintain the people's love to their persons. And this is best done by loving of them, and dealing lovingly and patiently with them. There should be no striving with them, especially about worldly things; yea, "meekness to them that oppose themselves," (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25, 26). It is of great advantage to have their love. How carefully doth Paul sue for it in several epistles, and condescend to entreat and make apologies, when indeed he had not wronged them, but they only did imagine he had wronged them! (2 Cor. xi.)

3dly, It would further the winning of souls to deal particularly and personally with them,—not always nor altogether in public (Col. i. 28, Acts xx. 20, 21).

Great fruit hath constantly followed the conscientious discharge of this duty. The setting of it up in Geneva did produce incredible fruits of piety, as Calvin reports, when the ministers, and some of the elders, went from house to house, and dealt particularly with the people's consciences. And we are not without many instances of the fruit of this mean in our own time, and in these nations. Blessed be the Lord for the labourers, and their success.

4thly, Ministers must pray much if they would be successful. The apostles spent their time this way, (Acts vi. 3). Yea, our Lord Jesus preached all day, and continued all night alone in prayer to God. Ministers should be much in prayer. They use to reckon how many hours they spend in reading and study; it were far better both with ourselves and the church of God, if more time were spent in prayer. Luther's spending three hours daily in secret prayer, Bradford's studying on his knees, and other instances of men in our time, are talked of rather than imitated. Ministers should pray much for themselves, for they have corruptions like other men, and have temptations that none but ministers are assaulted with. They should pray for their message. How sweet and easy is it for a minister (and likely it is to be the more profitable to the people) to bring forth that scripture as food to the souls of his people, that he hath got opened to his own heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the exercise of faith and love to prayer! A minister should pray for a blessing on the word; and he should be much in seeking God, particularly for the people. It may be this may be the reason why some ministers of meaner gifts and parts are more successful than some that are far above

them in abilities; not because they preach better, so much as because they pray more. Many good sermons are lost for lack of much prayer in study.

But because the ministry of the word is the main instrument for winning souls, I shall therefore add somewhat more particularly concerning this, and that both as to the matter and manner of preaching.

1. For the subject-matter of gospel-preaching, it is determined by the apostle expressly to be "Christ crucified," (1 Cor. ii. 2). Two things ministers have to do about him in preaching him to them that are without. 1. To set him forth to people (Gal. iii. 1); to paint him in his love, excellency, and ability to save. 2. To offer him unto them freely, fully, without any limitation as to sinners, or their sinful state. And then Christ's laws or will to be published to them that receive him, and are his, for the rule of their walk; and his promises, for the measure and foundation of all their hopes and expectations; and his grace and fulness, for their supply in every case, till they be brought to heaven. This was the simplicity of the gospel that remained but a little while in the Christian church; for ceremonies amongst the Jews, and sinful mixtures of vain philosophy amongst the Gentiles (Col. ii.), did by degrees so corrupt the gospel, that the mystery of iniquity ripened in the production of antichrist. It was a sad observation of the fourth century, that it became a matter of learning and ingenuity to be a Christian. The meaning was,—that too much weight was laid on notions and matters of opinion, and less regard had unto the soundness of the heart and holiness of the life. In the beginning of the reformation from Popery, the worthies whom God raised up in several countries did

excellently in retrieving the simplicity of the gospel from the Popish mixtures. But that good work took a stand quickly, and is on the declining greatly. How little of Jesus Christ is there in some pulpits! It is seen as to success, that whatever the law doth in alarming sinners, it is still the gospel-voice that is the key that opens the heart to Jesus Christ. Would ministers win souls? Let them have more of Jesus Christ in their dealing with men, and less of other things that never profit them that are exercised therein.

2. As for the manner of successful preaching, I shall give it in a negative and positive, from these two places: 1 Cor. i. 17, and ii. 1–4.

*First,* What this negative disowns is our inquiry. The words are full: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Again, "I came not to you with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." Again, "And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." These are the words of the Holy Ghost concerning a way of preaching that is unprofitable,—a way that it seems was in use and respect with the Corinthians; and honest Paul was despised by them, for his simple and plain way, different from theirs. I shall only instance in things that this scriptural negative doth check and reprove in the way of preaching.

1. The establishing and advancing of divine truth upon the foundation of human reason, as if there were some weakness and insufficiency in those methods and arguments of working on men's consciences

that the Holy Ghost prescribes. The great foundation of all a minister hath to say is, "Thus saith the Lord;" and a grave declaring of the testimony of God in this matter is ministers' duty (1 Cor. ii. 1), and will have more authority on men's consciences than many human reasons. There is a rational preaching (as it is called), wherein men do not satisfy themselves to make use of reason as a tool and instrument (and then its use is excellent), but will establish it as a judge and dictator in all divine matters and truth, and so in effect turn all their preaching into little better things than the lectures of the philosophers of old, save that the poor Pagans were more sincere in their morals, and serious in delivering their opinions.

Let a minister, therefore, still think with himself, that a plain scripture-testimony is his main argument, and accordingly let him use it. When he teacheth philosophy, and when he teacheth men the will of God about salvation, he is in distinct provinces, and his management of his work therein should be very different.

2. It is to preach with "excellency of speech," and "words of man's wisdom," when men think to reach the gospel end on sinners by force of even spiritual reason and persuasion. This corrupt thought riseth in some, from an imagination that moral suasion is all that is needful for converting a sinner; and in some this thought rises on a better account: the light of the glory of God in the gospel shines so brightly in upon their own hearts, that they fall into this conceit, that no man can stand before that light which they can hold forth: Melancthon's mistake at first, till experience made him wiser. Hast thou a

clear knowledge of gospel-mysteries, and the word of exhortation is with thee also, so that thou art qualified to urge, beseech, and plead warmly with sinners on Christ's behalf? Take heed of this snare, lest thou think that thy wisdom and gifts can promote and carry on the gospel-design on men.

3. This also is checked in the apostle's words, the setting forth the beauty of the gospel by human art. The truth of the gospel shines best in its bare proposal, and its beauty in its simple and naked discovery. We may observe from the church-history, that still as soundness of doctrine, and the power of godliness, decayed in the church, the vanity of an affected way of speaking and of writing of divine things came in. Quotations from the Fathers, Latin, and languages, are pitiful ornaments unto preaching, if a man design conversion and soul-edification. And yet more despicable are all playing on words, jinglings, and cadences (which things are in all the rules of true eloquence justly exploded); and yet some men reckon much on them. But would any man think his friend in earnest with him, that would accost him in any affair with such sort of language and gesture?

*Secondly*, The positive is "in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power," (1 Cor. ii. 5).

1. Paul preached so as gave a demonstration that the Holy Ghost was in him, sanctifying him. This is a plain and blessed thing. Happy is the minister that manageth his work so, that if the hearers get not a demonstration of great parts and learning, yet they have a demonstration of the sanctifying Spirit of God in the minister.

2. Paul preached so as gave a demonstration that the Spirit of God was with him, assisting and help-

ing him in his work; even when he was amongst them "in much weakness, fear, and trembling," (ver. 3). Happy is the minister that can preach this way. He must be a depender upon assistance from the Holy Ghost.

3. Paul preached so as a demonstration of the power of the Holy Ghost was given to the hearts of the hearers. The Spirit of God so wrought on them by his power in and by Paul's preaching, "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" (2 Cor. iv. 2). This is the principal thing to be aimed at, and it is the proper source of all profitable preaching.

III. To conclude: You that are ministers, suffer a word of exhortation.

Men, brethren, and fathers, you are called to an high and holy calling. Your work is full of danger, full of duty, and full of mercy. You are called to the winning of souls; an employment near a-kin unto our Lord's work, the saving of souls; and the nearer your spirits be in conformity to his holy temper and frame, the fitter you are for, and the more fruitful you shall be in your work. None of you are ignorant of the begun departure of our glory, and the daily advance of its departure, and the sad appearances of the Lord's being about to leave us utterly. Should not these signs of the times rouse up ministers unto greater seriousness? What can be the reason of this sad observation, That when formerly a few lights raised up in the nation, did shine so as to scatter and dispel the darkness of Popery in a little time; yet now when there are more, and more learned men amongst us, the darkness comes on

apace? Is it not because they were men "filled with the Holy Ghost, and with power;" and many of us are only filled with light and knowledge, and inefficacious notions of God's truth? Doth not always the spirit of the ministers propagate itself amongst the people? A lively ministry, and lively Christians. Therefore be serious at heart; believe, and so speak; feel, and so speak; and as you teach, so do; and then people will feel what you say, and obey the word of God.

And, lastly, for people: It is not unfit that you should hear of minister's work, and duty, and difficulties. You see that all is of your concernment. "All things are for your sakes," as the apostle saith in another case.

Then only I entreat you,

1. Pity us. We are not angels, but men of like passions with yourselves. Be fuller of charity than of censure. We have all that you have to do about the saving of our own souls: and a great work besides about the saving of yours. We have all your difficulties as Christians; and some that you are not acquainted with, that are only ministers' temptations and trials.

2. Help us in our work. If you can do any thing, help us in the work of winning souls. What can we do, say you? Oh! a great deal. Be but won to Christ, and we are made. Make haste to heaven, that you and we may meet joyfully before the throne of God and the Lamb.

3. Pray for us. How often and how earnestly doth Paul beg the prayers of the churches! And if he did so, much more should we beg them, and you

grant them; for our necessities and weaknesses are greater than his. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith." (2 Thess. iii. 1, 2).

# A VINDICATION

OF THE

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION, AND OF ITS PREACHERS AND PROFESSORS, FROM THE UNJUST CHARGE OF ANTINOMIANISM.

IN A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR TO A MINISTER IN THE COUNTRY.

YOUR earnest desire of information about some difference amongst Nonconformists in London, whereof you hear so much by flying reports, and profess you know so little of the truth thereof, is the cause of this writing.

You know, that not many months ago there was fair-like appearance of unity betwixt the two most considerable parties on that side; and their differences having been rather in practice than principle, about church-order and communion, seemed easily reconcileable, where a spirit of love, and of a sound mind, was at work. But how short was the calm! For quickly arose a greater storm from another quarter; and a quarrel began upon higher points, even on no less than the doctrine of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the justification of a sinner by faith alone. Some think, that the re-printing of Dr Crisp's book gave the first rise to it. But we must look farther back for its true spring. It is well known, but little considered, what a great progress Arminianism had made in this nation before the beginning of the civil war. And surely it hath lost

little since it ended. What can be the reason why the very parliaments in the reign of James I. and Charles I. were so alarmed with Arminianism, as may be read in history, and is remembered by old men; and that now for a long time there hath been no talk, no fear of it; as if Arminianism were dead and buried, and no man knows where its grave is? Is not the true reason to be found in its universal prevailing in the nation?

But that which concerneth our case, is, that the middle way betwixt the Arminians and the Orthodox, had been espoused, and strenuously defended and promoted by some Nonconformists, of great note for piety and parts; and usually such men that are for middle ways in points of doctrine, have a greater kindness for that extreme they go half-way to, than for that which they go half-way from. And the notions thereof were imbibed by a great many students, who laboured (through the iniquity of the times) under the great disadvantage of the want of grave and sound divines, to direct and assist their studies at universities; and therefore contented themselves with studying such English authors as had gone in a path untrod, both by our predecessors, and by the Protestant universities abroad.

These notions have been preached, and wrote against, by several divines amongst themselves; and the different opinions have been, till of late, managed with some moderation; to which our being all borne down by persecution, did somewhat contribute.

It is a sad, but true observation, that no contentions are more easily kindled, more fiercely pursued, and more hardly composed, than those of divines; sometimes from their zeal for truth, and sometimes

from worse principles, that may act in them, as well as in other men.

The subject of the controversy is, about the justifying grace of God in Jesus Christ. Owned it is by both; and both fear it be abused: either by turning it into wantonness,—hence the noise of Antinomianism; or by corrupting it with the mixture of works,—hence the fears, on the other side, of Arminianism. Both parties disown the name cast upon them. The one will not be called Arminians: and the other hate both name and thing of Antinomianism truly so called. Both sometimes say the same thing, and profess their assent to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms composed at Westminster, and to the Harmony of the Confessions of all the reformed churches, in these doctrines of grace. And, if both be candid in this profession, it is very strange that there should be any controversy amongst them.

Let us therefore, first, take a view of the parties, and then of their principles. As to the party suspected of Antinomianism and Libertinism in this city, it is plain, that the churches wherein they are concerned, are more strict and exact in trying of them that offer themselves unto their communion, as to their faith and holiness, before their admitting them; in the engagements laid on them to a gospel-walking at their admission, and in their inspection over them afterwards. As to their conversations, they are generally of the more regular and exact frame; and the fruits of holiness in their lives, to the praise of God, and honour of the gospel, cannot with modesty be denied. Is it not unaccountable, to charge a people with licentiousness, when the

chargers cannot deny, and some cannot well bear the strictness of their walk? It is commonly said, that it is only their principles, and the tendency of them to loose walking, that they blame. But, waving that at present, it seems not fair to charge a people with licentious doctrines, when the professors thereof are approved of for their godliness; and when they do sincerely profess, that their godliness began with, and is promoted by the faith of their principles. Let it not be mistaken, if I here make a comparison betwixt Papists and Protestants. The latter did always profess the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was blasphemy in the Papist's ears. They still did, and do cry out against it, as a licentious doctrine, and destructive of good works. Many sufficient answers have been given unto this unjust charge. But to my purpose: The wonder was, that the Papists were not convinced by the splendid holiness of the old believers, and by the visible truth of their holy practice; and their professing, that as long as they lived in the blindness and darkness of popery, they were profane; and that as soon as God revealed the gospel to them, and had wrought in them the faith thereof, they were sanctified, and led other lives. So witnessed the noble Lord Cobham, who suffered in King Henry V.'s time, above an hundred years before Luther. His words at his examination before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his clergy, were these: "As for that virtuous man, Wickliff, (for with his doctrine he was charged), whose judgment ye so highly disdain; I shall say of my part, both before God and man, that before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin; but since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath other-

wise, I trust, been with me. So much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions." (Fox's Book of Martyrs, vol. i. p. 640, col. 2. edit. 1664). And since I am on that excellent book, I entreat you to read Mr Patrick Hamilton's little treatise, to which Frith doth preface, and Fox doth add some explication (vol. ii. p. 181–192), where ye will find the old plain Protestant truth about law and gospel, delivered without any school-terms. To this, add, in your reading, in the same volume (p. 497–509. "Heresies and errors falsely charged on Tindal's writings"), where we will see the old faith of the saints in its simplicity, and the old craft and cunning of the Anti-christian party, in slandering the truth. I must, for my part, confess, that these plain declarations of gospel-truth have a quite other favour with me, than the dry insipid accounts thereof given by pretenders to human wisdom.

But passing these things, let us look to principles, and that with respect to their native and regular influence on sanctification. And I am willing that that should determine the matter, next to the consonancy of the principles themselves to the word of God. It can be no doctrine of God, that is not according to godliness. Some think, that if good works, and holiness, and repentance, be allowed no room in justification, that there is no room left for them in the world, and in the practice of believers. So hard seems it to be to some, to keep in their eye the certain fixed bounds betwixt justification and sanctification. There is no difference betwixt a justified and a sanctified man; for he is always the same person that partakes of these privileges. But justification

and sanctification differ greatly, in many respects; as is commonly known. But to come a little closer:

The party here suspected of Antinomianism, do confidently protest, before God, angels, and men, That they espouse no new doctrine about the grace of God and justification, and the other coincident points, but what the reformers at home and abroad did teach, and all the Protestant churches do own. And that in sum is: "That a law-condemned sinner is freely justified by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; that he is justified only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by God of his free grace, and received by faith alone as an instrument; which faith is the gift of the same grace." For guarding against licentiousness, they constantly teach, out of God's word, "That without holiness no man can see God: That all that believe truly on Jesus Christ, as they are justified by the sprinkling of his blood, so are they sanctified by the effusion of his Spirit: that all that boast of their faith in Christ, and yet live after their own lusts, and the course of this world, have no true faith at all; but do, in their profession, and contradicting practice, blaspheme the name of God, and the doctrine of his grace; and continuing so, shall perish with a double destruction, beyond that of the openly profane, that make no profession." And when they find any such in their communion, which is exceeding rarely, they cast them out as dead branches. They teach, "That as the daily study of sanctification is a necessary exercise to all that are in Christ; so the rule of their direction therein, is the holy spotless law of God in Christ's hand: That the Holy Ghost

is the beginner and advancer of this work, and faith in Jesus Christ the great mean thereof: That no man can be holy till he be in Christ, and united to him by faith; and that no man is truly in Christ, but he is thereby sanctified. They preach the law, to condemn all flesh out of Christ, and to shew thereby to people the necessity of betaking themselves to him for salvation." See the savoury words of blessed Tindal, called the apostle of England, in his letter to John Frith, written Jan. 1533, (Book of Martyrs, vol. ii. p. 308). "Expound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses, to condemn all flesh, and prove all men sinners, and all deeds under the law, before mercy have taken away the condemnation thereof, to be sin, and damnable; and then as a faithful minister, set abroach the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let the wounded consciences drink of the water of him. And then shall your preaching be with power, and not as the hypocrites. And the Spirit of God shall work with you; and all consciences shall bear record unto you, and feel that it is so. And all doctrine that casteth a mist on these two, to shadow and hide them, I mean the law of God, and mercy of Christ, that resist you with all your power." And so do we.

What is there in all this to be offended with? Is not this enough to vindicate our doctrine from any tendency to licentiousness? I am afraid that there are some things wherein we differ more than they think fit yet to express. And I shall guess at them.

1. The first is about the imputed righteousness of Christ. This righteousness of Christ, in his active and passive obedience, hath been asserted by Protestant divines, to be not only the procuring and meri-

torious cause of our justification; for this the Papists own; but the matter; as the imputation of it is the form of our justification: though I think that our logical terms are not so adapted for such divine mysteries. But whatever propriety or impropriety be in such school terms, the common Protestant doctrine hath been, that a convinced sinner seeking justification, must have nothing in his eye but this righteousness of Christ, as God proposeth nothing else to him; and that God in justifying a sinner, accepts him in this righteousness only, when he imputes it to him.

Now, about the imputed righteousness of Christ some say, "That it belongs only to the person of Christ: he was under the law, and bound to keep it for himself; that he might be a fit Mediator, without spot or blemish. That it is a qualification in the Mediator, rather than a benefit acquired by him, to be communicated to his people." For they will not allow "this personal righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us any otherwise than in the merit of it, as purchasing for us a more easy law of grace; in the observation whereof they place all our justifying righteousness:" understanding hereby "our own personal inherent holiness, and nothing else." They hold, "That Christ died to merit this of the Father, to-wit that we might be justified upon easier terms under the gospel, than those of the law of innocency. Instead of justification by perfect obedience, we are now to be justified by our own evangelical righteousness, made up of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience." And if we hold not with them in this, they tell the world we are enemies to evangelical holiness, slighting the practice of all good works, and allowing our hearers to live as they list. Thus they slander

the preachers of free grace, because we do not place justification in our own inherent holiness; but in Christ's perfect righteousness, imputed to us upon our believing in him. Which faith, we teach, purifies the heart, and always inclines to holiness of life. Neither do we hold any faith to be true and saving, that doth not shew itself by good works; without which no man is, or can be justified, either in his own conscience, or before men. But it doth not hence follow that we cannot be justified in the sight of God by faith only, as the apostle Paul asserts the latter, and the apostle James the former, in a good agreement.

2. There appears to be some difference, or misunderstanding of one another, about the true notion and nature of justifying faith. Divines commonly distinguish betwixt the *direct act of faith*, and the *reflex act*. The *direct act* is properly justifying and saving faith; by which a lost sinner comes to Christ, and relies upon him for salvation. The *reflex act* is the looking back of the soul upon a former act of faith. A rational creature can reflect upon his own acts, whether they be acts of reason, faith, or unbelief.

A *direct act* of saving faith, is that by which a lost sinner goes out of himself to Christ for help, relying upon him only for salvation. A *reflex act* ariseth from the sense that faith gives of its own inward act, upon a serious review. The truth and sincerity of which is further cleared up to the conscience, by the genuine fruits of an unfeigned faith, appearing to all men in our good lives, and holy conversation. But for as plain as these things be, yet we find we are frequently mistaken by others: and we wonder at the mistake; for we dare not ascribe to some learned and

good men, the principles of ignorance, or wilfulness, from whence mistakes in plain cases usually proceed. When we do press sinners to come to Christ by a direct act of faith, consisting in an humble reliance upon Him for mercy and pardon; they will understand us, whether we will or not, of a reflex act of faith, by which a man knows and believes, that his sins are pardoned, and that Christ is his: when they might easily know that we mean no such thing. Mr Walter Marshall, in his excellent book, lately published, hath largely opened this, and the true controversy of this day, though it be eight or nine years since he died.

3. We seem to differ about the interest, and room, and place, that faith hath in justification. That we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, is so plainly a New Testament truth, that no man pretending never so barely to the Christian name, denies it. The Papists own it; and the Socinians, and Arminians, and all, own it. But how different are their senses of it! And indeed you cannot more speedily and certainly judge of the spirit of a man, than by his real inward sense of this phrase, (if you could reach it), *A sinner is justified by faith in Jesus Christ.* Some say, That faith in Jesus Christ justifies as it is a work, by the τὸ *credere;* as if it came in the room of perfect obedience, required by the law. Some, that faith justifies, as it is informed and animated by charity. So the Papists, who plainly confound justification and sanctification. Some say that faith justifies, as it is a fulfilling of the condition of the new covenant, "If thou believest, thou shalt be saved." Nay, they will not hold there; but they will have this faith to justify, as it hath a principle and fitness in it

to dispose to sincere obedience. The plain old Protestant doctrine is, That the place of faith in justification is only that of a hand or instrument, receiving the righteousness of Christ, for which only we are justified. So that though great scholars do often confound themselves and others, in their disputations about faith's justifying a sinner; every poor plain believer hath the marrow of this mystery feeding his heart; and he can readily tell you, That to be justified by faith, is to be justified by Christ's righteousness, apprehended by faith.

4. We seem to misunderstand one another about the two Adams, and especially the latter. (See Rom. v. 12. to the end.) In that excellent scripture a comparison is instituted, which if we did duly understand, and agree in, we should not readily differ in the main things of the gospel. The apostle there tell us, that the first Adam stood in the room of all his natural posterity. He had their stock in his hand. While he stood they stood in him; when he fell, they fell with him. By his fall he derived sin and death to all them that spring from him by natural generation. This is the sad side. But he tells us in opposition thereto, and in comparing therewith, that Christ, the second man, is the new head of the redeemed world. He stands in their room: his obedience is theirs; and he communicates to his spiritual offspring. the just contrary to what the first sinful Adam doth to his natural offspring; righteousness instead of guilt and sin, life instead of death, justification instead of condemnation, and eternal life instead of hell deserved. So that I think the 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters of the epistle to the Romans, for the mystery of justification; and the 6th, 7th, and 8th, for the mystery of sanctification

deserve our deep study. But what say others about Christ's being the second Adam? We find them unwilling to speak of it; and when they do, it is quite alien from the scope of the apostle in that chapter. Thus to us they seem to say, "That God as a rector, ruler, governor, hath resolved to save men by Jesus Christ: That the rule of this government is the gospel, as a new law of grace: That Jesus Christ is set at the head of this rectoral government: That in that state he sits in glory, ready and able, out of his purchase and merits, to give justification and eternal life to all that can bring good evidence of their having complied with the terms and conditions of the law of grace." Thus they antedate the last day, and hold forth Christ as a Judge, rather than a Saviour. Luther was wont to warn people of this distinction frequently, in his comment on the epistle to the Galatians. And no other headship to Christ do we find some willing to admit, but what belongs to his kingly office. As for his suretiship, and being the second Adam, and a public person, some treat it with contempt. I have heard that Dr Thomas Goodwin was in his youth an Arminian, or at least inclining that way; but was by the Lord's grace brought off, by Dr Sibbs clearing up to him this same point, of Christ's being the head and representative of all his people. Now, though we maintain stedfastly this headship of Jesus Christ, yet we say not, that there is an actual partaking of his fulness of grace, till we be in him by faith; though this faith is also given us on Christ's behalf, (Phil. i. 29), and we believe through grace, (Acts xviii. 27). And we know no grace, we can call nothing grace, we care for no grace, but what comes from this head, the Sa-

viour of the body. But so much shall serve to point forth the main things of difference and mistakes.

Is it not a little provoking that some are so captious that no minister can preach in the hearing of some, "of the freedom of God's grace; of the imputation of Christ's righteousness; of sole and single believing on him for righteousness and eternal life; of the impossibility of a natural man's doing any good work before he be in Christ; of the impossibility of the mixing of man's righteousness and works with Christ's righteousness in the business of justification, and several other points," but he is immediately called or suspected to be an Antinomian? If we say that faith in Jesus Christ is neither work, nor condition, nor qualification, in justification, but is a mere instrument, receiving (as an empty hand receiveth the freely given alms) the righteousness of Christ; and that, in its very act, it is a renouncing of all things but the gift of grace: the fire is kindled. So that it is come to that, as Mr Christopher Fowler said, "that he that will not be Antichristian must be called an Antinomian." Is there a minister in London who did not preach, some twenty, some thirty years ago, according to their standing, that same doctrine now by some called Antinomian? Let not Dr Crisp's book be looked upon as the standard of our doctrine. There are many good things in it, and also many expressions in it that we generally dislike. It is true that Mr Burgess and Mr Rutherford wrote against Antinomianism, and against some that were both Antinomians and Arminians. And it is no less true that they wrote against the Arminians, and did hate the new scheme of divinity, so much now contended for, and to which we owe all

our present contentions. I am persuaded, that if these godly and sound divines were on the present stage, they would be as ready to draw their pens against two books lately printed against Dr Crisp, as ever they were ready to write against the doctor's book. Truth is to be defended by truth; but error is often and unhappily opposed by error under truth's name.

But what shall we do in this case? What shall we do for peace with our brethren? Shall we lie still under their undeserved reproaches, and, for keeping the peace, silently suffer others to beat us unjustly? If it were our own personal concern, we should bear it: if it were only their charging us with ignorance, weakness, and being unstudied divines (as they have used liberally to call all that have not learned, and dare not believe their new divinity), we might easily pass it by, or put it up. But when we see the pure gospel of Christ corrupted, and an Arminian gospel new vampt, and obtruded on people, to the certain peril of the souls of such as believe it, and our ministry reflected upon, which should be dearer to us than our lives, can we be silent? As we have a charge from the Lord, to deliver to our people what we have received from him, so, as he calls and enables, we are not to give place by subjection, not for an hour, to such as creep in, not only to spy out, but to destroy, not so much the gospel-liberty as the gospel-salvation we have in Christ Jesus, and to bring us back under the yoke of legal bondage. And indeed the case in that epistle to the Galatians and ours has a great affinity.

Is it desired that we should forbear to make a free offer of God's grace in Christ to the worst of sinners?

This cannot be granted by us, for this is the gospel "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation" (and therefore worthy of all our preaching of it), "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and the chief of them," (1 Tim. i. 15). This was the apostolic practice, according to their Lord's command (Mark xvi. 15, 16; Luke xxiv. 47). They began at Jerusalem, where the Lord of life was wickedly slain by them; and yet life in and through his blood was offered to, and accepted and obtained by, many of them. Every believer's experience witnesseth to this, that every one that believes on Jesus Christ acts that faith as the chief of sinners. Every man that seeth himself rightly thinks so of himself, and therein thinks not amiss. God only knoweth who is truly the greatest sinner, and every humbled sinner will think that he is the man.

Shall we tell men, that unless they be holy, they must not believe on Jesus Christ? that they must not venture on Christ for salvation till they be qualified and fit to be received and welcomed by him? This were to forbear preaching the gospel at all, or to forbid all men to believe on Christ. For never was any sinner qualified for Christ. He is well qualified for us (1 Cor. i. 30); but a sinner out of Christ hath no qualification for Christ but sin and misery. Whence should we have any better, but in and from Christ? Nay, suppose an impossibility, that a man were qualified for Christ, I boldly assert that such a man would not, nor could ever believe on Christ,—for faith is a lost, helpless, condemned sinner's casting himself on Christ for salvation, and the qualified man is no such person.

Shall we warn people that they should not believe

on Christ too soon? It is impossible that they should do it too soon. Can a man obey the great gospel-command too soon? (1 John iii. 23), or do the great work of God too soon? (John vi. 28, 29). A man may too soon think that he is in Christ, and that is when it is not so indeed; and this we frequently teach. But this is but an idle dream, and not faith. A man may too soon fancy that he hath faith; but I hope he cannot act faith too soon. If any should say, a man may be holy too soon, how would that saying be reflected upon? And yet it is certain that though no man can be too soon holy (because he cannot too soon believe on Christ, which is the only spring of true holiness), yet he may, and many do, set about the study of that he counts holiness too soon; that is, before "the tree be changed," (Matt. xii. 33, 34, 35); before he have "the new heart," (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27), and the "Spirit of God dwelling in him," which is only got by faith in Christ (Gal. iii. 14); and therefore all this man's studying of holiness is not only vain labour, but acting of sin. And if this study, and these endeavours, be managed as commonly they are, to obtain justification before God, they are the more wicked works still. And because this point is needful to be known, I would give you some testimonies for it. Doctrine of the Church of England, in her thirty-nine articles, Art. 13,—"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not

but they have the nature of sin." So Confession of Faith, chap. 16, art. 7. Calvin. Instit. lib. 3, cap. 15, sect. 6,—"They (saith he, speaking of the Popish schoolmen) have found out I know not what moral good works, whereby men are made acceptable to God before they are ingrafted into Christ. As if the scripture lied when it said, 'They are all in death who have not the Son,' (1 John v. 12). If they be in death, how can they beget matter of life? As if it were of no force, 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;' as if 'evil trees could bring forth good fruit.'" Read the rest of that section. On the contrary, the Council of Trent, sess. 6, canon 7, say boldly, "Whosoever shall say that all works done before justification, howsoever they be done, are truly sin, and deserve the hatred of God, let him be anathema." And to give you one more bellowing of the beast, wounded by the light of the gospel, see the same Council, sess. 6, canon 11, "*Si quis dixerit, Gratiam qua justificamur, esse tantum favorem Dei, anathema sit.*" This is fearful blasphemy, saith Dr Downham, bishop of Londonderry, in his orthodox book of justification, lib. 3, cap. 1, where he saith, "That the Hebrew words which in the Old Testament signify 'the grace of God,' do always signify 'favour,' and never 'grace inherent.' And above fifty testimonies may be brought from the New Testament, to prove that by 'God's grace' his 'favour' is still meant." But what was good Church of England doctrine at and after the Reformation, cannot now go down with some Arminianizing nonconformists.

If, then, nothing will satisfy our quarrelling brethren but either silence as to the main points of the gospel which we believe, and live by the faith of, and

look to be saved in,—which we have for many years preached, with some seals of the Holy Ghost in converting sinners unto God, and in building them up in holiness and comfort, by the faith and power of them, —which also we vowed to the Lord to preach to all that will hear us, as long as we live, in the day when we gave up ourselves to serve God with our spirit in the gospel of his Son: if either this silence, or the swallowing down of Arminian schemes of the gospel, contrary to the New Testament, and unknown to the reformed churches in their greatest purity, be the only terms of peace with our brethren, we must then maintain our peace with God and our own consciences, in the defence of plain gospel truth, and our harmony with the reformed churches, and in the comfort of these bear their enmity. And though it be usual with them to vilify and contemn such as differ from them, for their fewness, weakness, and want of learning, yet they might know that the most learned and godly in the Christian world have maintained and defended the same doctrine we stand for for some ages. The grace of God will never want, for it can and will furnish defenders of it. England hath been blessed with a Bradwardine, an Archbishop of Canterbury, against the Pelagians: a Twiss and Ames against the Arminians. And though they that contend with us would separate their cause altogether from that of these two pests of the Church of Christ, I mean Pelagius and Arminius, yet judicious observers cannot but already perceive a coincidency, and do fear more, when either the force of argument shall drive them out of their lurking-holes, or when they shall think fit to discover their secret sentiments, which yet we but guess at. Then, as we shall

know better what they would be at, so it is very like that they will then find enemies in many whom they have seduced by their craft, and do yet seem to be in their camp; and will meet with opposers, both at home and abroad, that they think not of.

Our doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, however it be misrepresented and reflected upon, is yet undeniably recommended by four things.

1. It is a doctrine savoury and precious unto all serious godly persons. Dr Ames's observation holds good as to all the Arminian divinity, that it is *contra communem sensum fidelium*; "against the common sense of believers." And though this be an argument of little weight with them that value more the judgment of the scribes, and the wise, and disputers of this world, (1 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20, 21), than of all the godly; yet the Spirit of God by John gives us this same argument, "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error;" (1 John iv. 5, 6). How evident is it that several who, by education, or an unsound ministry, having had their natural enmity against the grace of God strengthened, when the Lord by his Spirit hath broke in upon their hearts, and hath raised a serious soul-exercise about their salvation; their turning to God in Christ, and their turning from Arminianism, hath begun together? And some of the greatest champions for the grace of God have been persons thus dealt with, as we might instance. And as it is thus with men at their conversion, so is it found afterward that still

as it is well with them in their inner man, so doth the doctrine of grace still appear more precious and savoury. On the other part, all the ungodly and unrenewed have a dislike and disrelish of this doctrine, and are all for the doctrine of doing, and love to hear it; and, in their sorry exercise, are still for doing their own business in salvation; though they be nothing, and can do nothing, but sin, and destroy themselves.

2. It is that doctrine only by which a convinced sinner can be dealt with effectually. When a man is awakened, and brought to that, that all must be brought to, or to worse: "What shall I do to be saved?" we have the apostolic answer to it, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" (Acts xvi. 30, 31). This answer is so old, that with many it seems out of date. But it is still, and will ever be, fresh, and new, and savoury, and the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world lasts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or devise another or a better answer; nor can any but this alone heal rightly the wound of an awakened conscience. Let us set this man to seek resolution in this case of some masters in our Israel. According to their principles, they must say to him, "Repent, and mourn for your known sins, and leave them and loathe them, and God will have mercy on you." "Alas! (saith the poor man) my heart is hard, and I cannot repent aright; yea, I find my heart more hard and vile than when I was secure in sin." If you speak to this man of qualifications for Christ, he knows nothing of them; if of sincere obedience, his answer is native and ready, "Obedience is the work

of a living man, and sincerity is only in a renewed soul." Sincere obedience is therefore as impossible to a dead unrenewed sinner as perfect obedience is. Why should not the right answer be given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved?" Tell him what Christ is, what he hath done and suffered to obtain eternal redemption for sinners, and that according to the will of God and his Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the gospel-salvation wrought out by the Son of God; tell him the history and mystery of the gospel plainly. It may be the Holy Ghost will work faith thereby, as he did in those first-fruits of the Gentiles, (Acts x. 44). If he ask what warrant he hath to believe on Jesus Christ? tell him that he hath utter indispensable necessity for it, for without believing on him he must perish eternally; that he hath God's gracious offer of Christ and all his redemption, with a promise that upon accepting the offer by faith, Christ and salvation with him is his; that he hath God's express commandment to believe on Christ's name (1 John iii. 23); and that he should make conscience of obeying it as well as any command in the moral law. Tell him of Christ's ability and good-will to save; that no man was ever rejected by him that cast himself upon him; that desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of his art of saving. Tell him that there is no midst between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuse for neglecting the one, and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation is more pleasing to God than all obedience to his law; and that unbelief is the most provoking to God, and the most damning to man, of all sins. Against the greatness of his sins, the curse

of the law, and the severity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held forth to him but the free and boundless grace of God in the merit of Christ's satisfaction by the sacrifice of himself. If he should say, What is it to believe on Jesus Christ? As to this, I find no such question in the word, but that all did some way understand the notion of it: the Jews that did not believe on him (John vi. 28, 29, 30); the chief priests and Pharisees (John vii. 48); the blind man (John ix. 35). When Christ asked him, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" he answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" Immediately, when Christ had told him (ver. 37), he saith not, What is it to believe on him? but, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped him; and so both professed and acted faith in him. So the father of the lunatic (Mark ix. 23, 24); and the eunuch (Acts viii. 37). They all, both Christ's enemies and his disciples, knew that faith in him was a believing that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, so as to receive and look for salvation in his name (Acts iv. 12). This was the common report published by Christ and his apostles and disciples, and known by all that heard it. If he yet ask, What he is to believe? you tell him that he is not called to believe that he is in Christ, and that his sins are pardoned, and he a justified man, but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ; and "this record is, that God giveth (that is, offereth) to us eternal life in his Son Jesus Christ," (1 John v. 10, 11, 12); and that all that with the heart believe this report, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, shall be saved, (Rom. x. 9, 10, 11). And thus he is to "believe, that he may be justified," (Gal. ii. 16).

If he still say that this believing is hard, this is a good doubt, but easily resolved. It bespeaks a man deeply humbled. Any body may see his own impotence to obey the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of believing. For his resolution, ask him, what it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be so saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in him, and to the voiding of all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the gospel-record? This he dare not own. Is it a doubt of Christ's ability or good-will to save? This is to contradict the testimony of God in the gospel. Is it because he doubts of an interest in Christ and his redemption? You tell him that believing on Christ makes up the interest in him. If he say that he cannot believe on Jesus Christ, because of the difficulty of the acting this faith, and that a divine power is needful to draw it forth, which he finds not; you tell him, that believing in Jesus Christ is no work; but a resting on Jesus Christ; and that this pretence is as unreasonable as that if a man wearied with a journey, and who is not able to go one step further, should argue, "I am so tired that I am not able to lie down," when indeed he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ till he finds he can do nothing for himself, and in his first believing doth always apply himself to Christ for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the gospel, the Lord will (as he hath often done) convey faith, and joy, and peace, by believing.

3. This doctrine of free justification by faith alone,

hath this advantage, That it suits all men's spirits and frame in their serious approaches to God in worship. Men may think and talk boldly of inherent righteousness, and of its worth and value; of good works, and frames, and dispositions: but when men present themselves before the Lord, and have any discoveries of his glory, all things in themselves will disappear, and be looked upon as nothing. Zophar, though the hottest speaker of Job's friends, did yet speak rightly to him, "For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But, Oh that God would speak!" (Job xi. 4, 5). And so Job found it, when God displayed his glory to him, and that only in the works of creation and providence, (chap. xxxviii. xxxix): He then changed his note, (Job xl. 4, 5, and xlii. 2–6). So was it with Isaiah, (chap vi. 5), till pardoning grace was imparted to him. No man can stand before this holy Lord God, with any peace and comfort, unless he have God himself to stay upon. His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, can only preserve a man from being consumed; and the faith of it from being confounded. Hence we see the difference betwixt men's frame in their disputes and doctrine about these points, and their own sense and pleadings with God in prayer.

4. This doctrine of justification by faith without any mixtures of man, (however, and by what names and titles soever they be dignified or distinguished), hath this undoubted advantage, That it is that which all not judicially hardened and blinded do, or would or must betake themselves unto, when dying. How loath would men be to plead that cause on a deathbed, which they so stoutly stand up for with tongue and pen, when at ease, and that evil day far away?

They seem to be jealous, lest God's grace and Christ's righteousness have too much room, and men's works too little, in the business of justification. But was there ever a sensible dying person exercised with this jealousy as to himself? Even bloody Stephen Gardiner, when a-dying, could answer Dr Day, Bishop of Chichester, who offered comfort to him by this doctrine, "What, my Lord, will you open that gap now? Then, farewell altogether. To me, and such other in my case, you may speak it; but open this window to the people, then farewell altogether;" (Book of Martyrs, vol. iii. p. 450). In which words, he bewrayed a conviction of the fitness of the doctrine to dying persons, and his knowledge that it tended to the destroying the kingdom of Antichrist. As Fox, in the same Book of Martyrs, (vol. ii. p. 46), gives this as the reason of Luther's success against Popery, above all former attempts of preceding witnesses. "But (saith he) Luther gave the stroke, and plucked down the foundation, and all by opening one vein, long hid before, wherein lieth the touchstone of all truth and doctrine, as the only principal origin of our salvation; which is, our free justification, by faith only, in Christ the Son of God." Consider how it is with the most holy and eminent saints when dying. Did ye ever see or hear any boasting of their works and performances? They may, and do own, to the praise of his grace, what they have been made to be, what they have been helped to do or suffer for Christ's sake. But when they draw near to the awful tribunal, what else is in their eye and heart, but only free grace, ransoming blood, and a well-ordered covenant in Christ the Surety? They cannot bear to hear any make men-

tion to them of their holiness, their own grace and attainments. In a word, the doctrine of conditions, qualifications, and rectoral government, and the distribution of rewards and punishments, according to the new law of grace, will make but an uneasy bed to a dying man's conscience ; and will leave him in a very bad condition at present, and in dread of worse, when he is feeling, in his last agonies, that the wages of sin is death, if he cannot by faith add, " But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," (Rom. vi. 23). He is a wise and happy man that anchors his soul on that rock, at which he can ride out the storm of death. Why should men contend for that in their life, that they know they must renounce at their death? or neglect that truth now, that they must betake themselves unto then? Why should a man build a house, which he must leave in a storm, or be buried in its ruins? Many architects have attempted to make a sure house of their own righteousness: but it is without a foundation; and must fall, or be thrown down sorrowfully by the foolish builder; which is the better way. It is a great test of the truth of the doctrine about the way of salvation, when it is generally approved of by sensible dying men. And what the universal sense of all such in this case is, as to the righteousness of Christ, and their own, is obvious to any man. He was an ingenuous Balaamite, who being himself a Papist, said to a Protestant, "Our religion is best to live in, and yours best to die in."

But notwithstanding of these great advantages (and they are but a few of many) that this doctrine is attended with, there are not a few disadvantages it

labours under; which though they are rather to its commendation than reproach, yet they do hinder its welcome and reception. As,

1. This doctrine is a spiritual mystery, and lieth not level to a natural understanding, (1 Cor. ii. 10, 14). Working for life, a man naturally understands; but believing for life, he understands not. To mend the old man, he knows; but to put on the new man by faith, is a riddle to him. The study of holiness, and to endeavour to square his life according to God's law, he knows a little of, though he can never do it; but to draw sanctification from Christ by faith, and to walk holily, in and through the force of the Spirit of Christ in the heart by faith, is mere canting to him. A new life he understands a little; but nothing of a new birth and regeneration. He never saw himself stark dead. Nay, not only it is unknown to the natural man, but he is by his natural state an enemy to it. He neither doth, nor can know it, nor approve of it, (1 Cor. ii. 14). "Wisdom (that is, Christ's way of saving men revealed in the gospel) is justified of all her children," and of them only, (Matt. xi. 19, Luke vii. 29, 30, 35). This enmity in men to the wisdom of God, is the cause not only of this contempt of its ministry, but is a temptation to many ministers to patch up and frame a gospel that is more suited to, and taking with, and more easily understood by such men, than the true gospel of Christ is. This Paul complains of in others, and vindicates himself from, (1 Cor. i. 17, and ii. 2). He warns others against it, (Col. ii. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 3, 4; Gal. i. 6, 7, 8, 9). And it is certain, that doing for life is more suited to corrupt nature, than believing is.

2. Our opposers in this doctrine have the many for

them, and against us; as they of old boasted (John vii. 48). This they have no ground to glory in, though they do; nor we to be ashamed of the truth, because we cannot vie in numbers with them. With our opposers are all these sorts, (and they make a great number); though I do not say or think, that all our opposers are to be ranked in any of these lists; for some, both godly and learned, may mistake us, and the truth, in this matter. 1. They have all the ignorant people, that know nothing either of law or gospel. They serve God, (they say, but most falsely); and hope that God will be merciful to them, and save them. To all such, both the clear explication of God's law, and the mysteries of the gospel, are strange things. Yet sincere obedience they love to hear of; for all of them think there is some sincerity in their hearts, and that they can do somewhat. But of faith in Christ they have no knowledge; except by faith you understand a dream of being saved by Jesus Christ, though they know nothing of him, or of his way of saving men, nor of the way of being saved by him. 2. All formalists are on their side; people that place their religion in trifles, because they are strangers to the substance thereof. 3. All proud secure sinners are against us, that go about with the Jews, "to establish their own righteousness," (Rom. x. 3). The secure are whole, and see no need of the physician; the proud have physic at home, and despise that that came down from heaven. 4. All the zealous devout people in a natural religion, are utter enemies to the gospel. By a natural religion, I mean that that is the product of the remnants of God's image in fallen man, a little improved by the light of God's word. All such cannot endure to hear, that

God's law must be perfectly fulfilled in every tittle of it, or no man can be saved by doing; that they must all perish for ever, that have not the righteousness of a man that never sinned, who is also God over all blessed for ever, to shelter and cover them from a holy God's anger, and to render them accepted of him: that his righteousness is put on by the grace of God, and a man must betake himself to it, and receive it as a naked blushing sinner: that no man can do any thing that is good, till gospel-grace renew him, and make him first a good man. This they will never receive, but do still think that a man may grow good by doing good.

3. Natural reason is very fertile in its objections and cavils against the doctrine of the grace of God; and especially when this corrupt reason is polished by learning and strong natural parts. When there are many to broach such doctrine, and many so disposed to receive it, is it any wonder that the gospel-truth makes little progress in the world? Nay, were it not for the divine power that supports it, and the promises of its preservation, its enemies are so many and strong, and true friends so few and feeble, we might fear its perishing from the earth. But we know it is impossible. And if the Lord have a design of mercy to these nations, and hath a vein of his election to dig up amongst us, we make no doubt, but the glory of Christ, as a crucified Saviour, shall yet be displayed in the midst of us, to the joy of all that love his salvation, and to the shame of others, (Isa. lxvi. 5).

4. I might add the great declension of some of the reformed churches from the purity and simplicity of that doctrine they were first planted in. The new methodists about the grace of God, had too great an

increase in the French churches. And, which was very strange, this declension advanced amongst them, at the same time, when Jansenism was spreading amongst many of the church of Rome: so that a man might have seen Papists growing better in their doctrine, and Protestants growing worse. (See Mr Gale's Idea of Jansenism, with Dr Owen's preface.) What there is of this amongst us in England, I leave the reader to Mr Jenkin's Celeusma, and to the Naked Truth, part 4. And if there be any warping toward Arminian doctrine by some on our side, in order to ingratiate themselves with that church that hath the secular advantages to dispense, and to make way for some accommodation with them, I had rather wait in fear till a further discovery of it, than offer to guess at.

5. *Lastly*, It is no small disadvantage this doctrine lies under from the spirit of the day we live in. A light, frothy, trifling temper, prevails generally; doctrines of the greatest weight are talked of and treated about, with a vain unconcerned frame of spirit; as if men contended rather about opinions and school-points, than about the oracles of God, and matters of faith. But if men's hearts were seen by themselves; if sin were felt; if men's consciences were enlivened; if God's holy law were known in its exactness and severity, and the glory and majesty of the lawgiver shining before men's eyes; if men were living as leaving time, and launching forth into eternity, the gospel-salvation by Jesus Christ would be more regarded.

*Object.* 1. Is there not a great decay amongst professors in real practical godliness? Are we like the old Protestants, or the old Puritans? I answer, That

the decay and degeneracy is great, and heavily to be bewailed. But what is the cause? and what will be its cure? Is it because the doctrine of morality, and virtue, and good works, is not enough preached? This cannot be: for there hath been for many years a public ministry in the nation, that make these their constant themes. Yet the land is become as Sodom for all lewdness; and the tree of profaneness is so grown, that the sword of the magistrate hath not yet been able to lop off any of its branches. Is it because men have too much faith in Christ? or too little? or none at all? Would not faith in Christ increase holiness? did it not always so? and will it not still do it? Was not the holiness of the first Protestants eminent and shining? and yet they generally put assurance in the definition of their faith. We cannot say that gospel-holiness hath prospered much by the correction or mitigation of that harsh-like definition. The certain spring of this prevailing wickedness in the land, is people's ignorance and unbelief of the gospel of Christ; and that grows by many prophets that speak lies to them in the name of the Lord.

*Object.* 2. But do not some abuse the grace of the gospel, and turn it into wantonness? *Answer.* Yes; some do, ever did, and still will do so. But it is only the ill-understood and not believed doctrine of grace that they abuse. The grace itself no man can abuse; for its power prevents its abuse. Let us see how Paul, that blessed herald of this grace, (as he was an eminent instance of it,) dealeth with this objection, (Rom. vi. 1). What doth he to prevent this abuse? Is it by extenuating what he had said, chap. v. 20, that "grace abounds much more, where sin had abounded?" Is it by mincing grace smaller,

that men may not choke upon it, or surfeit by it? Is it by mixing something of the law with it, to make it more wholesome? No: but only by plain asserting the power and influence of this grace, wherever it really is; as at length in that chapter. This grace is all treasured up in Christ Jesus, offered to all men in the gospel, poured forth by our Lord in the working of faith; and drunk in by the elect in the exercise of faith, and becomes in them a living spring, which will and must break out and spring up in all holy conversation. He exhorts them to drink in more and more of this grace by faith. And as for such as pretend to grace, and live ungodly, the Spirit of God declares they are void of grace, which is always fruitful in good works, (2 Peter ii. and Jude's epistle), The apostle orders the churches to cast such out (1 Cor. v., 2 Tim. iii. 5), and to declare to them as Peter did to a professor, that "they have no part nor portion in this matter, for their heart is not right in the sight of God," (Acts viii. 20, 21), though the doctrine be right, that they hypocritically profess.

But if our brethren will not forbear their charge of Antinomianism, we entreat them that they will give it in justly. As, 1. On them that say that the sanction of the holy law of God is repealed, so that no man is now under it, either to be condemned for breaking it or to be saved by keeping it, which to us is rank Antinomianism and Arminianism both, yea, that it doth not now require perfect holiness. But indeed what can it require? for it is no law if its sanction be repealed. 2. On them let the charge lie that are ungodly under the name of Christianity. And both they and we know where to find such true Antinomians in great abundance, who yet are ne-

ver called by that name. And is it not somewhat strange, that men who have so much zeal against an Antinomian principle, have so much kindness for true Antinomians in practice? 3. Let him be called by this ugly name that judgeth not the holy law and word of God written in the Old and New Testament to be a perfect rule of life to all believers, and saith not that all such should study conformity thereunto, (Rom. xii. 2.) 4. That encourageth himself in sin, and hardeneth himself in impenitence by the doctrine of the gospel. No man that knows and believes the gospel can do so. What some hypocrites may do is nothing to us who disown all such persons and practices, and own no principle that can really encourage the one or influence the other. 5. That thinketh holiness is not necessary to all that would be saved. We maintain, not only that it is necessary to, but that it is a great part of salvation. 6. Whoever thinks that when a believer comes short in obeying God's law, he sins not, and that he ought not to mourn because of it as provoking to God and hurtful to the new creation in him, and that he needs not renew the exercise of faith and repentance for repeated washing and pardoning. Lastly, That say that a sinner is actually justified before he be united to Christ by faith. It is strange that such as are charged with this, of all men, do most press on sinners to believe on Jesus Christ, and urge the damnation threatened in the gospel upon all unbelievers. That there is a decreed justification from eternity, particular and fixed as to all the elect, and a virtual perfect justification of all the redeemed in and by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Isaiah liii. 11, Rom. iv.

25, Heb. ix. 26, 28, and x. 14), is not yet called in question by any amongst us; and more is not craved but that a sinner, for his actual justification, must lay hold on and plead this redemption in Christ's blood by faith.

But, on the other hand, we glory in any name of reproach (as the honourable reproach of Christ) that is cast upon us for asserting the absolute boundless freedom of the grace of God, which excludes all merit, and everything like it; the absoluteness of the covenant of grace, (for the covenant of redemption was plainly and strictly a conditional one, and the noblest of all conditions was in it. The Son of God's taking on him man's nature, and offering it in sacrifice, was the strict condition of all the glory and reward promised to Christ and his seed, Isaiah liii. 10, 11), wherein all things are freely promised, and that faith that is required for sealing a man's interest in the covenant is promised in it, and wrought by the grace of it (Eph. ii. 8). That faith at first is wrought by, and acts upon a full and absolute offer of Christ, and of all his fulness; an offer that hath no condition in it, but that native one to all offers, acceptance: and in the very act of this acceptance, the accepter doth expressly disclaim all things in himself, but sinfulness and misery. That faith in Jesus Christ doth justify (although by the way it is to be noted, that it is never written in the word, that faith justifieth actively, but always passively, that a man is justified by faith, and that God justifieth men by and through faith; yet admitting the phrase) only as a mere instrument receiving that imputed righteousness of Christ for which we are justified; and that this faith,

in the office of justification, is neither condition nor qualification, nor our gospel-righteousness, but in its very act a renouncing of all such pretences.

We proclaim the market of grace to be free, (Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3). It is Christ's last offer and lowest, (Rev. xxii. 17). If there be any price or money spoke of, it is *no price, no money*. And where such are the terms and conditions, if we be forced to call them so, we must say, that they look liker a renouncing, than a boasting of any qualifications or conditions. Surely the terms of the gospel-bargain are, God's free giving, and our free taking and receiving.

We are not ashamed of teaching the ineffectualness of the law, and all the works of it, to give life; either that of justification, or of regeneration and sanctification, or of eternal life: That the law of God can only damn all sinners; that it only rebukes, and thereby irritates and increases sin; and can never subdue it till gospel-grace come with power upon the heart; and then when the law is written in the heart, it is copied out in the life.

That we call men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in that case the first Adam brought them to, and left them in; in that case that the law finds and leaves them in, guilty, filthy, condemned: out of which case they can only be delivered by Christ, and by believing on him.

That we tell sinners, that Jesus Christ will surely welcome all that come to him; and, as he will not cast them out for their sinfulness in their nature and by-past life, so neither for their misery, in the want of such qualifications and graces that he only can give.

That we do hold forth the propitiation in Christ's blood, as the only thing to be in the eye of a man

that would believe on Christ unto justification of life; and that by this faith alone a sinner is justified, and God is justified in doing so.

That God "justifieth the ungodly," (Rom. iv. 5), neither by making him godly before he justify him, nor leaving him ungodly after he hath justified him; but that the same grace that justifies him, doth immediately sanctify him.

If for such doctrine we be called Antinomians, we are bold to say, that there is some ignorance of, or prejudice at the known Protestant doctrine, in the hearts of the reproachers.

That there are some things we complain of. As,

1. That they load their brethren so grievously with unjust calumnies, either directly or by consequence, as when they preach up holiness, and the necessity of it, as if it were their proper doctrine, and disowned by us, when they cannot but know in their consciences that there is no difference betwixt them and us about the nature and necessity of holiness, but only about its spring and place in salvation. We derive it from Jesus Christ and faith in him, and know assuredly that it can spring from nothing else. We place it betwixt justification and glory, and that is its scripture-place, and no where else can it be found or stand, let them try it as much and as long as they will.

2. That they seem very zealous against Antinomianism, and forget the other extreme of Arminianism, which is far more common, as dangerous, and far more natural to all men. For though there have been, and may be this day, some true Antinomians, either through ignorance, or weakness, reeling to that extreme, or by the heat of contention with, and hatred

of Arminianism, (as it is certain some very good and learned men have inclined to Arminianism, through their hatred of Antinomianism, and have declared so much); and some may, and do corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, through the unrenewedness of their hearts, yet how destructive soever this abuse may be to the souls of the seduced, such an appearance of Antinomianism is but a meteor or comet that will soon blaze out, and its folly will be quickly hissed off the stage. But the principles of Arminianism are the natural dictates of a carnal mind, which is enmity both to the law of God and to the gospel of Christ; and, next to the dead sea of Popery (into which also this stream runs), have, since Pelagius to this day, been the greatest plague of the church of Christ, and it is like will be till his second coming.

3. We do also justly complain, that, in their opposing of true Antinomian errors, and particularly the alleged tenets of Dr Crisp, they hint that there is a party of ministers and professors that defend them; whereas we can defy them to name one minister, in London at least, that doth so.

4. That expressions capable of a good sense are strenuously perverted, contrary to the scope of the writer or speaker. But this and such like are the usual methods of unfair contenders. Were the like methods taken on the other side, how many Popish, Arminian, yea and Socinian expressions, might be published? If any gospel-truth be preached or published, that reflects on the idol of self-righteousness, and justification thereby, it is soon quarrelled with. But reproaches cast on the free grace of God, and the imputed righteousness of Christ are with them, if not approved, yet but venial, well-meant mistakes.

Let men's stated principles be known, and their expressions explained accordingly, or mistakes and contentions will be endless.

5. We do also complain, that love to peace hath made many grave and sound divines forbear to utter their minds freely in public on these points: whereby the adverse party is emboldened; and such ministers as dare not purchase peace by silence, when so great truths are undermined, are exposed as a mark. But we do not question but these worthy brethren, when they shall see the points of controversy accurately stated (as they may shortly), will openly appear on truth's side, as we know their hearts are for it.

*Lastly*, We complain, that the scheme of the gospel contended for by our opposers, is clouded, vailed, and darkened by school terms; new, uncouth, and unscriptural phrases; whereby as they think to guard themselves against opposition, so they do increase the jealousies of their brethren, and keep their principles from the knowledge of ordinary people, who are as much concerned in those points as any scholar or divine.

This controversy looks like a very bad omen. We thought we might have healed our old breaches, in smaller things; and, behold, a new one is threatened in the greatest matters. We did hope, that the good old Protestant doctrine had been rooted and riveted in the hearts of all the ministers on our side; but now we find the contrary, and that the sour leaven of Arminianism works strongly. Their advocates do not yet own the name; but the younger sort are more bold and free: and with them no books or authors are in esteem and use, but such as are for the new rational method of divinity. (Rational is a fitter

commendation of a philosopher, than of a divine: and yet it is somewhat better applied to a divine, than to divinity; for true divinity hath a higher and nobler original than man's reason, even divine revelation; and it can never be rightly learned by them that have no higher principle in them than reason, even the teaching of the Holy Ghost.) But for Luther, Calvin, Zanchy, Twisse, Ames, Perkins, and divines of their spirit and stamp, they are generally neglected and despised.

We were in hope, that after the Lord had so signally appeared for his truth and people, in preserving both, under the rage of that Antichristian spirit of persecution and apostasy to gross Popery, that wrought so mightily under the two last reigns, and when he had given us the long-desired mercy of a legal establishment of our gospel-liberty in this, that all hearts and hands should have been unanimously employed in the advancing of the work of Christ. But we find, that as we have for a long time lost, in a great measure, the power, we are now in no small danger of losing also the purity of the gospel. And without them what signifies liberty!

It is undoubted that the devil designs the obstructing of the course of the gospel; and in this he hath often had the service of the tongues and pens of good men, as well as of bad. Yet we are not without hope, that the Lord, in his wisdom and mercy, will defeat him; and that these contentions may yet have good fruit and a good issue.

For furthering of this good end, let me request a few things of my brethren.

1. Let us not receive reports suddenly of one another. In times of contention, many false reports

are raised, and rashly believed. This is both the fruit and the fuel of contention. For all the noise of Antinomianism, I must declare, that I do not know (and I have both opportunity and inclination to inquire) any one Antinomian minister or Christian in London, who is really such as their reproachers paint them out, or such as Luther and Calvin wrote against.

2. Let us make Christ crucified our great study, as Christians; and the preaching of him our main work, as ministers. Paul determined to know nothing else, (1 Cor. ii. 2). But many manage the ministry, as if they had taken up a contrary determination, even to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. We are amazed to see so many ashamed of the cross of Christ, and to behave as if they accounted the tidings of salvation by the slain Son of God, an old antiquated story, and unfit to be daily preached. And what comes in the room thereof, is not unknown, nor is it worth the mentioning. For all things that come in Christ's room, and justle him out, either of hearts or pulpits, are alike abominable to a Christian. How many sermons may a man hear, and read when printed, yea, and books written, about the way to heaven, wherein is hardly the name of Jesus Christ! And if he be named, it is the name of Christ as a Judge and Lawgiver, rather than that of a Saviour. And as little room hath Christ in many men's prayers; except it be in the conclusion. When we cannot avoid the observing of those sad things, let it be a sharp spur to us, to preach Christ more, to pray more in his name, and to live more to his praise. Let us not be deceived with that pretence, That Christ may be preached, when he is not named. The preaching of the gospel is the naming of Christ,

and so called, (Rom. xv. 20). And Paul was to "bear Christ's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts ix. 15).

3. Let us study hard, and pray much, to know the truth, and to cleave unto it. It is an old observation, *Ante Pelagium securius loquebantur patres:* "Before Pelagius even the fathers spoke more carelessly;" meaning well, and fearing no mistakes in their hearers. Now, it is not so; the more careful should we be in our doctrine. Let us search our own consciences, and see how we ourselves are justified before God. So Paul argued, Gal. ii. 15, 16. And let us bring forth that doctrine to our people, that we find in our Bibles, and have felt the power of upon our own hearts.

4. Let us not run into extremes, upon the right or left hand, through the heat of contention; but carefully keep the good old way of the Protestant doctrine, wherein so many thousands of saints and martyrs of Jesus have lived holily, and died happily, who never heard of our new schemes and notions.

And, for this end, let us take and cleave to the test of the Assembly's Confession of Faith and Catechisms. More we own not ourselves, more we crave not of our brethren; and because we deal fairly and openly, I shall set it down *verbatim*. (Conf. chap. xi. Of Justification). *Art.* 1. "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but

by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God."

*Art.* 2. "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love."

*Art.* 3. "Christ, by his obedience and faith, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, in as much as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

*Art.* 4. "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them."

*Art.* 5. "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified. And although they can never fall from the state of justification; yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance."

*Art.* 6. "The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament." This is the whole chapter exactly.

*Larger Catechism.*—"*Q.* How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God? *Ans.* Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works, that are the fruits of it,—nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification,—but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness."

Let these weighty words be but heartily assented to in their plain and native sense, and we are one in this great point of justification. But can any considering man think that the new scheme, of a real change, repentance, and sincere obedience, as necessary to be found in a person that may lawfully come to Christ for justification; of faith's justifying, as it is the spring of sincere obedience; of a man's being justified by, and upon his coming up to the terms of the new law of grace (a new word, but of an old and ill meaning); can any man think that this scheme and the sound words of the Reverend Assembly do agree? Surely, if such a scheme had been offered to that grave, learned, and orthodox synod, it would have had a more severe censure passed upon it than I am willing to name.

Do not we find, in our particular dealings with souls, the same principles I am now opposing?

When we deal with the carnal, secure, careless sinners (and they are a vast multitude), and ask them a reason of that hope of heaven they pretend to, is

not this their common answer: "I live inoffensively. I keep God's law as well as I can; and wherein I fail, I repent, and beg God's mercy for Christ's sake. My heart is sincere, though my knowledge and attainments be short of others?" If we go on to inquire further, What acquaintance they have with Jesus Christ? what application their souls have made to him? what workings of faith on him? what use they have made of his righteousness for justification, and his Spirit for sanctification? what they know of living by faith in Jesus Christ? we are barbarians to them. And in this sad state many thousands in England live, and die, and perish eternally. Yet so thick is the darkness of the age, that many of them live here and go hence with the reputation of good Christians, and some of them may have their funeral sermon and praises preached by an ignorant, flattering minister, though it may be the poor creatures never did, in the whole course of their life, nor at their death, employ Jesus Christ so much for an entry to heaven, purchased by his blood, and only accessible by faith in him, as a poor Turk doth Mahomet, for a room in his beastly paradise. How common and fearful a thing is this in this land and city!

When we come to deal with a poor awakened sinner, who seeth his lost state, and that he is condemned by the law of God, we find the same principles working in him; for they are natural, and therefore universal in all men, and hardly rooted out of any. We find him sick and wounded; we tell him where his help lies, in Jesus Christ; what his proper work is, to apply to him by faith. What is his answer? "Alas!" saith the man, "I have been and I am so vile a sinner, my heart is so bad, and so

full of plagues and corruptions, that I cannot think of believing on Christ. But if I had but repentance, and some holiness in heart and life, and such and such gracious qualifications, I would then believe,"—when indeed this his answer is as full of nonsense, ignorance, and pride as words can contain or express. They imply, 1. "If I were pretty well recovered, I would employ the Physician, Christ. 2. That there is some hope to work out these good things by myself, without Christ. 3. And when I come to Christ with a price in my hand, I shall be welcome. 4. That I can come to Christ when I will." So ignorant are people naturally of faith in Jesus Christ; and no words or warnings repeated, nor plainest instructions, can beat into men's heads and hearts that the first coming to Christ by faith, or believing on him, is not a believing we shall be saved by him, but a believing on him, that we may be saved by him. And it is less to be wondered at that ignorant people do not, when so many learned men will not, understand it.

When we deal with a proud, self-righteous hypocrite, we find the same principles of enmity against the grace of the gospel. A profane person is not so enraged at the rebukes of sin from the law, as these Pharisees are at the discovery of their ruin by unbelief. They cannot endure to have their idol of self-righteousness touched, neither by the spirituality of God's law, that condemns all men, and all their works, while out of Christ; nor by the gospel, which reveals another righteousness than their own, by which they must be saved: but they will have God's ark of the covenant to stand as a captive in the temple of their Dagon of self-righteousness, until the

vengeance of God's despised covenant overthrow both the temple, and idol, and worshippers.

There is not a minister that dealeth seriously with the souls of men, but he finds an Arminian scheme of justification in every unrenewed heart. And is it not sadly to be bewailed that divines should plead that same cause that we daily find the devil pleading in the hearts of all natural men? and that instead of "casting down" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5), they should be making defences for such "strongholds" as must either be levelled with the dust, or the rebel that holds them out must eternally perish?

It is no bad way of studying the gospel, and of attaining more light into it, that may be used in dealing particularly with the consciences of all sorts of men, as we have occasion. More may be learned this way than out of many large books. And if ministers would deal more with their own consciences, and the consciences of others, in and about these points that are most properly cases of conscience, we should find an increase of gospel-light, and a growing fitness to preach aright, as Paul did: "By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. iv. 2).

Let us keep up, in our hearts and doctrine, a reverent regard of the holy law of God, and suffer not a reflecting, disparaging word or thought of it. The great salvation is contrived with a regard to it; and the satisfaction given to the law by the obedience and death of Christ our surety, hath made it glorious and honourable, more than all the holiness of saints on earth, or of the glorified in heaven, and than all the torments of the damned in hell, though they do also magnify the law and make it honourable. But

if men will teach that the law, and obedience unto it, whether perfect or sincere, is the righteousness we must be found in, and stand in, in our pleading for justification, they "neither understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm," (1 Tim. i. 7). They "become debtors to it," and "Christ profits them nothing," (Gal. ii. 21, and v. 2, 5). And we know what will become of that man that hath his debts to the law to pay, and hath no interest in the surety's payment. Yet many such offer their own silver, which, whatever coin of man be upon it, is reprobate, and rejected both by law and gospel.

Let us carefully keep the bounds clear betwixt the law and gospel, which, "whosoever doth, is a right perfect divine," saith blessed Luther, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,—a book that hath more plain sound gospel than many volumes of some other divines. Let us keep the law as far from the business of justification as we would keep condemnation, its contrary; for the law and condemnation are inseparable, but by the intervention of Jesus Christ our surety (Gal. iii. 10–14). But in the practice of holiness, the fulfilled law given by Jesus Christ to believers as a rule is of great and good use to them, as hath been declared.

*Lastly*, Be exact in your communion and church-administrations. If any walk otherwise than it becometh the gospel—if any abuse the doctrine of grace to licentiousness, draw the rod of discipline against them the more severely, that ye know so many wait for your halting, and are ready to speak evil of the ways and truths of God.

The wisdom of God sometimes orders the different opinions of men about his truth, for the clearing and

confirming of it, while each side watch the extremes that others may be in hazard of running into. And if controversy be fairly and meekly managed this way, we may differ, and plead our opinions, and both love and edify them we oppose,' and may be loved and edified by them in their opposition.

I know no fear possesseth our side but that of Arminianism. Let us be fairly secured from that, and as we ever hated true Antinomianism, so we are ready to oppose it with all our might. But having such grounds of jealousy as I have named (and it is well known that I have not named all), men will allow us to fear that this noise of Antinomianism is raised, and any advantage they have by the rashness and imprudence of some ignorant men is improved to a severe height by some, on purpose to shelter Arminianism in its growth, and to advance it further amongst us, which we pray and hope the Lord will prevent.

Yours,

ROB. TRAILL.

## POSTSCRIPT.

THIS paper presented to thee, was in its first design intended as a private letter to a particular brother, as the title bears. How it comes to be published, I shall not trouble the world with an account of. I think that Dr Owen's excellent book of Justification, and Mr Marshall's book of the Mystery of Sanctification by Faith in Jesus Christ, are such vindications and confirmations of the Protestant doctrine against which I fear no effectual opposition. Dr Owen's name is so savoury and famous, his sound-

ness in the faith, and ability in learning for its defence, so justly reputed, that no sober man will attempt him. Mr Marshall was a holy retired person, and is only known to the most of us by his book published lately. The book is a deep, practical, well-jointed discourse, and requires a more than ordinary attention in the reading of it with profit; and if it be singly used, I look upon it as one of the most useful books the world hath seen for many years. Its excellency is, that it leads the serious reader directly to Jesus Christ, and cuts the sinews and overturns the foundation of the new divinity, by the same argument of gospel-holiness by which many attempt to overturn the old; and as it hath already the seal of high approbation by many judicious ministers and Christians that have read it, so I fear not but it will stand firm as a rock against all opposition, and will prove good seed, and food, and light, and life, to many hereafter.

All my design in publishing this is, plainly and briefly to give some information to ordinary plain people, who either want time or judgment to peruse large and learned tractates about this point of justification, wherein every one is equally concerned.

The theme of justification hath suffered greatly by this, that many have employed their heads and pens who never had their hearts and consciences exercised about it; and they must be frigid and dreaming speculations that all such are taken up with whose consciences are not enlivened with their personal concern in it.

These things are undoubted: 1. That as it is a point of highest concern to every man, so it is to the whole doctrine of Christianity. All the great fun-

damentals of Christian truth centre in this of justification. The Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the incarnation of the only begotten of the Father; the satisfaction paid to the law and justice of God, for the sins of the world, by his obedience and sacrifice of himself in that flesh he assumed; and the divine authority of the scriptures, which reveal all this, are all straight lines of truth that centre in this doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the imputation and application of that satisfaction. No justification without a righteousness; no righteousness can be but what answers fully and perfectly the holy law of God; no such righteousness can be performed but by a divine person; no benefit can accrue to a sinner by it unless it be some way his, and applied to him; no application can be made of this but by faith in Jesus Christ. And as the connection with, and dependence of this truth upon, the other great mysteries of divine truth is evident in the plain proposal of it, so the same hath been sadly manifest in this, that the forsaking of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness, hath been the first step of apostasy in many, who have not stopped till they revolted from Christianity itself. Hence so many Arminians, and their chief leaders too, turned Socinians. From denying justification by Christ's righteousness, they proceeded to the denying of his satisfaction; from the denial of his proper satisfaction, they went on to the denying of the divinity of his person; and that man's charity is excessive that will allow to such blasphemers of the Son of God the name of Christians. Let not then the zeal of any so fundamental a point of truth as that is of the justification of a sinner by faith in Christ be charged with

folly. It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing, and this is the best of things.

2. It is undoubted that there is a mystery in this matter of justification. As it is God's act, it is an act of free grace and deep wisdom. Herein justice and mercy kiss one another in saving the sinner. Here appears God-man with the righteousness of God, and this applied and imputed to sinful men. Here man's sin and misery are the field in which the riches of God's grace in Christ are displayed. Here the sinner is made righteous by the righteousness of another, and obtains justification through this righteousness, though he pays and gives nothing for it. God declares him righteous, or justifies him freely; and yet he is well paid for it by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26). It is an act of justice and mercy both when God justifies a believer on Jesus Christ. And must there not then be a great mystery in it? Is not every believer daily admiring the depth of this way of God? This mystery is usually rather darkened than illustrated by logical terms used in the handling of it. The only defence that good and learned men have for the use of them is (and it hath great weight), that the craft of adversaries doth constrain them to use such terms, to find them out or hedge them in. It is certain that this mystery is as plainly revealed in the word, as the Holy Ghost thought fit to do in teaching the heirs of this grace; and it were well if men did contain themselves within these bounds.

3. It is certain that this doctrine of justification proposed in the word, hath been very differently understood and expressed by men that profess that God's word is the only rule of their thoughts and words

about the things of the Spirit of God. It hath been, and will be still a stone of stumbling, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself was, and is, (Rom. ix. 32, 33; 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8).

4. That whatever variety and differences there be in men's notions and opinions (and there is a great deal) about justification, they are all certainly reducible to two; one of which is every man's opinion. And they are, that the justification of a sinner before God, is either on the account of a righteousness in and of ourselves, or on the account of a righteousness in another, even Jesus Christ, who is "Jehovah our righteousness." Law and gospel, faith and works, Christ's righteousness and our own, grace and debt, do equally divide all in this matter. Crafty men may endeavour to blend and mix these things together in justification, but it is a vain attempt. It is not only most expressly rejected in the gospel, which peremptorily determines the contrariety, inconsistency, and incompatibility betwixt these two; but the nature of the things in themselves, and the sense and conscience of every serious person, do witness to the same, that our own righteousness, and Christ's righteousness, do comprehend all the pleas of men to justification (one or other of them every man in the world stands upon); and that they are inconsistent with, and destructive one of another, in justification. If a man trusts to his own righteousness, he rejects Christ's; if he trusts to Christ's righteousness, he rejects his own. If he will not reject his own righteousness, as too good to be renounced, if he will not venture on Christ's righteousness, as not sufficient alone to bear him out, and bring him safe off at God's bar, he is in both a convicted unbeliever. And if he

endeavour to patch up a righteousness before God, made up of both, he is still under the law, and a despiser of gospel-grace, (Gal. ii. 21). That righteousness that justifies a sinner, consists *in aliquo indivisibili*, and this every man finds when the case is his own, and he serious about it.

5. These different sentiments about justification, have been at all times managed with a special acrimony. They that are for the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ, look upon it as the only foundation of all their hopes for eternity, and therefore cannot but be zealous for it. And the contrary side are as hot for their own righteousness, the most admired and adored Diana of proud mankind, as if it were an image fallen down from Jupiter; when it is indeed the idol that was cast out of heaven with the devil, and which he hath ever since been so diligent to set up before sinful men to be worshipped, that he might bring them into the same condemnation with himself, for, by true sin and false righteousness he hath "deceived the whole world," (Rev. xii. 9).

6. As the Holy Ghost speaking in the scriptures, is the supreme and infallible judge and determiner of all truth, so where he doth particularly, and on purpose, deliver any truth, there we are specially to attend and learn. And though, in most points of truth, he usually teacheth us by a bare authoritative narration, yet, in some points, which his infinite wisdom foresaw special opposition to, he doth not only declare, but debate and determine the truth. And the instances are two especially. One is about the divinity of Christ's person, and dignity of his priesthood; reasoned, argued, and determined, in the

epistle to the Hebrews. The other is about justification by faith, exactly handled in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians. In the former of these two, the doctrine of free justification is taught us most formally and accurately. And though we find no charge against that church in Paul's time, or in his epistle for their departing from the truth in this point; yet the wisdom of the Holy Ghost is remarkable in this, that this doctrine should be so plainly asserted, and strongly proved, in an epistle to that church, the pretended successors whereof have apostatized from that faith, and proved the main assertors of that damnable error of justification by works. That to the Galatians is plainly written, to cure a begun, and obviate a full apostasy from the purity of the gospel, in the point of justification by faith, without the works of the law. And from these two epistles, if we be wise, we must learn the truth of this doctrine, and expound all other scriptures, in a harmony with what is there so setly determined, as *in foro contradictorio.*

7. *Lastly,* It is not to be denied, or concealed, that on each side, some have run into extremes, which the generality do not own, but are usually loaded with. The Papists run high for justification by works, yet even some of them, in the Council of Trent, discoursed very favourably of justification by faith. The Arminians have qualified a little the grossness of the Popish doctrine in this article, and some since have essayed to qualify that of the Arminians, and to plead the same cause more finely. Again, some have run into the other extreme, as appeared in Germany a little after the Reformation, and some such there have been always, and in all

places where the gospel hath shined, and these were called Antinomians. But how unjustly this hateful name is charged upon the orthodox preachers and sincere believers of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith only; who keep the gospel-midst betwixt these two rocks, is the design of this paper to discover. What we plead for, is in sum, that Jesus Christ our Saviour is "the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness," wherein only men can be washed in justification and sanctification, and that there is no other fountain of man's devising, nor of God's declaring, for washing a sinner first, so as to make him fit and meet to come to this, to wash, and to be clean.

As for inherent holiness, is it not sufficiently secured by the Spirit of Christ received by faith, the certain spring and cause of it: by the word of God, the plain and perfect rule of it, by the declared necessity of it to all them that look to be saved, and to justify the sincerity of a man's faith, unless we bring it in to justification, and thereby make our own pitiful holiness sit on the throne of judgment, with the precious blood of the Lamb of God?

Though I expect that a more able hand will undertake an examination of the new divinity; yet, to fill up a little room, I would speak somewhat to their Achillean argument, that is so much boasted of, and so frequently insisted on by them, as their shield and spear. Their argument is this, that Christ's righteousness is our legal righteousness, but our own is our evangelical righteousness; that is, when a sinner is charged with sin against the holy law of God, he may oppose Christ's righteousness as his legal defence; but against the charge of the gospel, especially for

unbelief, he must produce his faith, as his defence or righteousness against that charge.

With a great deference to such worthy divines as have looked on this as an argument of weight, I shall, in a few words, essay to manifest that this is either a saying the same in other odd words, that is commonly taught by us, or a sophism, or a departing from the Protestant doctrine about justification.

1. This argument concerns not at all the justification of a sinner before God. For this end, no more is needful, than to consider what this charge is, against whom it is given, and by whom. The charge is said to be given in by God, and a charge of unbelief, or disobeying the gospel. But against whom? Is it against a believer or unbeliever? and these two divide all mankind. If it be against a believer, it is a false charge, and can never be given in by the God of truth. For the believer is justified already by faith, and as to this charge he is innocent. And innocence is defence enough to a man falsely charged, before a righteous judge. Is this charge given in against an unbeliever? We allow it is a righteous charge. Ay, but say they, "Will Christ's righteousness justify a man from this charge of gospel-unbelief?" The answer is plain. No, it will not, nor yet from any other charge whatsoever, either from law or gospel; for he hath nothing to do with Christ's righteousness while an unbeliever. What then doth this arguing reprove? Is it, that no man's faith in Christ's righteousness can be justified in its sincerity before men, and in a man's own conscience, but in and by the fruits of a true lively faith? In this they have no opposers that I know of. Or is it, that a man may have Christ's righteousness for his legal right-

eousness, and yet be a rebel to the gospel, and a stranger to true holiness? Who ever affirmed it? Or is it, that this gospel-holiness is that which a man must not only have (for that we grant), but also may venture to stand in, and to be found in before God, and to venture into judgment with God upon, in his claim to eternal life? Then we must oppose them that think so, as we know their own consciences will when in any lively exercise. These plain principles of gospel-truth, while they remain, (and remain they will on their own foundation, when we are all in our graves, and our foolish contentions are buried), do overthrow this pretended charge. 1. That Christ's righteousness is the only plea and answer of a sinner arraigned at God's bar for life and death. 2. This righteousness is imputed to no man but a believer. 3. When it is imputed by grace, and applied by faith, it immediately and eternally becomes the man's righteousness, before God, angels, men, and devils, (Rom. viii. 33, 35, 38, 39). It is a righteousness that is never lost, never taken away, never ineffectual; answereth all charges, and is attended with all graces.

2. I would ask, what is that righteousness that justifies a man from the sin of unbelief? We have rejected the imaginary charge, let us now consider the real sin. Unbelief is the greatest sin against both law and gospel; more remotely against the law, which binds all men to believe God speaking, say what he will; more directly against the gospel, which tells us what we should believe, and commands us to believe. Let us put this case, (and it is pity the case is so rare, when the sin is so common), that a poor soul is troubled about the greatness of the sin of unbelief, in "calling God a liar," (1 John, v. 10), in

distrusting his faithful promise, in doubting Christ's ability and good will to save, in standing aloof so long from Jesus Christ; as many of the elect are long in a state of unbelief till called; and the best of believers have unbelief in some measure in them, (Mark ix. 24). Abraham's faith staggered sometimes, (Gen. xii. and xx). What shall we say to a conscience thus troubled? Will any man dare to tell him, that Christ's righteousness is his legal righteousness against the charge of sins against the law; but for gospel-charges, he must answer them in his own name? I know our hottest opposers would abhor such an answer; and would freely tell such a man, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin: and that his justification from his unbelief must be only in that righteousness which he so sinfully had rejected while in unbelief, and now lays hold on by faith.

3. But some extend this argument yet more dangerously; for they say, That not only men must have their faith for their righteousness against the charge of unbelief, but repentance against the charge of impenitence, sincerity against that of hypocrisy, holiness against that of unholiness, and perseverance as their gospel-righteousness, against the charge of apostasy. If they mean only, that these things are justifications and fruits of true faith, and of the sincerity of the grace of God in us; we do agree to the meaning; but highly dislike the expressions, as unscriptural and dangerous, tending to the dishonouring of the righteousness of Christ, and to run men on the rocks of pride and self-righteousness, that natural corruption drives all men upon. But if they mean that, either jointly or separately, they are our righteousness before God; or that, either separate from, or mixed with

Christ's righteousness, they may be made our claim and plea for salvation; I must say, that it is dangerous doctrine; and its native tendency is, to turn Christ's imputed righteousness out of the church, to destroy all the solid peace of believers, and to exclude gospel-justification out of this world, and reserve it to another, and that with a horrible uncertainty of any particular man's partaking of it. But these blessed truths of God, and blessings of believers, stand on firmer foundations than heaven or earth, and will continue fixed against all the attempts of the gates of hell. Blessed be the rock, Christ, on which all is built; blessed be the new covenant, "ordered in all things and sure;" and "blessed is he that believeth; for there shall be a performance of those things which are told him from the Lord," (Luke, i. 45.) Amen.

London, Sept. 1. 1692.

# SERMON

ON

## HEBREWS XII. 29.

"For our God is a consuming fire."—HEB. XII. 29.

THE transgression of the wicked saith, within the heart of every man to whom God hath given spiritual understanding, that there is no fear of God before their eyes. The formal and fearless approaches unto the Lord in all his ordinances, which have now become so common among professors, ought to say to us, that they have but little of this fear. The beginning, yea, the whole of religion, consisting in a great measure in this holy fear, and being denominated from it frequently in scripture, it cannot but be a sad evidence of the decay of religion, when this fear is so evidently wanting or weak: and therefore, to be exercised a little (if we would in the right manner) in the consideration of this matter, as it is at all times suitable to them to whom the vitals of religion are savoury, so, in a special manner it is pertinent for those, who have the solemn ordinance ensuing* in their eye and aim.

There are three false grounds upon which Satan and our own corrupt hearts are ready to plead against

* We find in the margin of the original MS., that this sermon was preached April 22, 1669, on the Thursday before the administration of the Sacrament. We learn also in the same note, that this was the first discourse which the author preached in London.

this so precious and necessary a grace, and the exercise of it. The *first* is more gross, yet such as carries away thousands to destruction; that is—an apprehension that God is all mercy and goodness. It is true his mercy and goodness are infinite; and yet, so is his justice. We shall not stand to shew either the grounds and reasons of this woful mistake, or to discover it largely; it is enough that it is here removed, by the Holy Ghost declaring somewhat of the terrible majesty of God, in a figurative expression. The *second* is—some think that the New Testament dispensation doth not so require the fear and dread of God, as the Old Testament did, as it did also then more manifest his dreadfulness, both at the giving of the Law, and in his punishments, sometimes extraordinary, for the breaches of it; but under the New Testament, he manifesteth his mercy, and calleth for love. The scope of the Apostle in bringing in this word, doth evidently obviate the mistake of this: for from the 18th verse to the end, he instituteth a comparison, and stateth the differences between the two dispensations; and in the preceding verse, doth draw a conclusion, from all the love and mercy revealed in the gospel, which is the worship with fear; and backs it with the argument in this our text. The *third* ground of mistake may be—granting the dreadfulness of God in himself, and in the New Testament dispensation also; yet, that a saving interest in this God, as ours in Christ, doth remove all this dreadfulness, and calls for nothing but love, and delight, and familiarity. This ground of mistake the Holy Ghost obviates, by declaring, that even "our God," our covenanted God, is a "consuming fire."

This word then containeth a very weighty declara-

tion of the dreadfulness of God, under the borrowed term of "a consuming fire." It is the gracious condescending way of the Holy Ghost, in scripture, to speak of God according to our capacities, and to manifest him by such names and descriptions as may convey to our understandings some sense and knowledge of him. By this word, then, we are to understand, that as fire, and a consuming fire, is a dreadful creature, so when the name of it is ascribed unto God, we are to take notice of his dreadful and terrible nature and majesty.

The words then being plain, we shall not stand to start and raise questions and difficulties from them. We have then these instructions from them:

Obser. 1. The Lord Jehovah is a most dreadful and terrible God: Obs. 2. And that as He is so in himself, so this attribute of his doth still continue, notwithstanding of a saving and covenant relation unto him. Both these are in the words themselves. Obs. 3. This truth hath a great influence, as a motive and argument, upon our serving of him with reverence and godly fear. The connecting word "*for*" beareth this.

As to the first,—The dreadfulness of God in himself—we may well say of this subject, as Jacob of that place, "How dreadful is it!" Much of the dread of it upon the heart, would enable us to speak and hear of it to better purpose than otherwise we do. We shall not prosecute it as a common-place, or multiply notions concerning it; but would plainly and briefly make it clear from the word. And as the metaphor here doth evidently point out a relation to some object which, as fuel, is in hazard of being devoured by this consuming fire, so, in speaking of this

terribleness of God, we shall prosecute it as relating to us. Consider him then, 1st, As in himself; 2d, In his works; 3d, In his ordinances.

*First*, Although every thing in God, (if we may use the phrase, nothing being in him which is not himself:) every attribute of God doth demonstrate this, we shall name but a few:

1. Consider his incommunicable attributes, which paint forth somewhat of his nature and being—his infiniteness, absolute sovereignty, eternity, independency, and inexpressible glory—and we, poor, finite, dependent beings, at the next door to nothing, lately brought out of nothing by his infinite power, and by the same every moment preserved from returning into it. This infinite distance betwixt him and us, will work dread in every considerate soul. It is a great wonder, that the whole frame of nature is not swallowed up by the glory of his majesty. Upon account of this, Abraham dreads to speak unto him: upon this account, the angels in a holy dread cover their faces; and Job, upon a discovery of this, abhors himself in dust and ashes: from this it is, that no man can see God and live; that is to say, a discovery of God in his majesty, is enough to confound a creature into nothing. "No man hath seen him at any time," saith he who is God—the Holy Ghost. This his glory is light inaccessible. "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see"—a strange word! Light is that which manifesteth every thing, and yet, it is a cover unto God from the eyes of all creatures.

2. Consider the holiness of his nature. "Holy, holy, holy!" (Isa. vi.; Rev. iv.): "Thou only art holy," (Rev. xv. 4). And therefore we, by the unholiness and vileness of our nature, our hearts, and

lives, are upon this account as stubble fully dry before him. Is it not a wonder then that He, who is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity, doth not every moment consume us who drink up iniquity as water? How can a sinner, then. not fear?

3. Consider this dreadful and holy One as sitting in judgment, and exercising his justice in making laws, and giving sentence against the breakers thereof. "His eyes behold the things that are equal; he sitteth in the throne, judging right." And here we are to be considered as breakers of his laws from the womb to the grave. Oh! how dreadful is this attribute of God! and how stupid must senseless hearts be!

4. And as this holy just One pronounceth righteous sentences, so there cometh next to be considered his infinite truth in accomplishing, and his irresistible power in executing them. No creature can, either by subtlety or strength, escape His hand.

*Secondly*, Consider the dreadfulness of this God in his works. The very sight of the glory of the heavens and earth—of the frame of nature, every way admirable—of his ordinary and extraordinary works—ought to stir in us a dread of this God: his ordering of all creatures, his accomplishing of all his purposes, his maintaining of this All—his sovereign distributing of blessedness and misery to men and angels, according to his wise decrees. Heaven and hell are dreadful things, and should awaken our hearts to greater fear.

*Thirdly*, But to come nearer to our present work. How much of his dreadful glory is to be seen in his church, and ordinances in dispensing of them, and the blessing or curse of them. He is terrible out of his holy places, (Psalm lxviii. 35; Gen. xxviii. 17).

In his ordinances this consuming fire draws near to us, and we to him, though with offers of mercy and salvation; yet to abusers there is a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. In prayer, we speak to him. Abraham, and Moses, and Jacob,—with what fear are they in this duty! The prophets begin with this, "Thus saith the Lord," to strike secure hearts with some awe of their Master. Here we hear him speaking to us. Do we communicate?—Damnation, judgment, and wrath are then to stir us up to a careful, heedful way of performing that duty.

But it may be said that all this is true; but we, who have a saving interest in this God, need not entertain such impressions. I answer, Happy indeed are they who upon good grounds can say so! Such, indeed, ought not to fear to be ever actually destroyed by this consuming fire. But yet there is a fear called for from such, and this leads us to the second note.

Obser. 2. Even God in covenant with his own is a dreadful God, (Deut. xxviii. 58). We find such in scripture entertain the most deep impressions of his terribleness; and that is, 1st, Because only such do know him, and none can know him but they must fear him. It is a most native effect of a discovery of God, to have a holy dread and fear of him. "Men do therefore fear him," (Job xxxvii. 24). Surely the want of fear floweth from ignorance. 2d, The Lord, though in covenant with his people, is still the same God, and in him are all those things which move holy fear. It is true that his justice having received satisfaction from their Surety, shall never break out against them to destroy them; and that, upon the account of their covenant-relation unto

him, they may with comfort and delight travel through all the attributes of God, even such as are most terrifying. Yet, notwithstanding of all this, all those things are still in our covenanted God, which are the grounds of fear and reverence. 3d, And as He is still the same, so we are but very little changed, and there is but a little of that removed that lays us open to destruction from this consuming fire. It is true that there is a change in the state of believers in their justification and adoption, which is a begun change in their natures in sanctification; yet still they are creatures—still there is much unholiness in their hearts and lives, and all sin in itself is equally hateful to God, and contrary to his holy nature; still they are under his holy law, and bound to obedience, though not as a covenant of life, yet as the rule of their life; still they are in hazard of his anger (though not as an unappeased enemy, yet as an offended father), and of the fruits of it, upon their breaking of his laws. 4th, The experience of the Lord's people who have felt somewhat of the wrath of God upon their own hearts for sin doth prove this, and calleth for fear. Not only at first conversion, when by a mighty hand He makes a conquest of them, the design whereof, though it be great mercy and salvation in his heart, yet his way of managing it towards many proclaimeth that anger in his face, and strokes in his hand; but after conversion, many experiences have the saints of the dreadfulness of God. It was so eminently with David, (Psalm cii. and li. 5). The saints have some attributes of God to move fear and dread, which others have not: his goodness, love, pardoning and healing mercy, the manifestations of that love and

mercy (Hos. iii. 5, Psalm cxxx. 4),—unto a considerate soul, how ready are these to stir up holy fear and dread!

The application and use of this doctrine the Holy Ghost here maketh, which is our third note.

Obser. 3. The dreadfulness of God ought to enforce a reverent and holy fearful way of serving him. This is evidently the scope of the Holy Ghost, in bringing in this reason to back the former exhortation. So Psalm ii. 11, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;" and, in the next verse, it is backed with the same argument; because there is burning wrath in him, gross sinners are in hazard of being destroyed; and this is said to be in the Son, the Mediator.

And in general, this sense of the dreadfulness of God, calleth for these three things in our way of serving him.

1. In all our approaches to him, and in all His approaches to us in his word or works, to have, and keep up upon the heart, a due deep sense of the infinite distance that there is betwixt him and us; and of his glory and majesty, and our vileness and nothingness. We find frequently in Scripture, that the more near the Lord did draw to his people, even in gracious communications of himself, the more of this was upon their hearts. How did the Lord's condescension to Abraham humble him? How did his merciful proclaiming of his name to Moses humble him? So was it with David, (2 Sam. vii. 18). Have a care that you forget not yourself, when he admitteth you to nearness to himself.

2. A second general observation in our way of serving of him, which this dread should stir us up unto,

is, always to approach unto him, and converse with him, in the Mediator. Without this, there is no possible escaping of being consumed in our approaches unto him. This is a blessed act of holy fear, and is of great concernment unto our safety. Not only in our first reconciliation with God we must have Christ with us, but we are to abide in him; to put him on as our apparel, as our armour to defend from wrath; and always to dwell in him, and to have him dwelling in us.

3. In all your worship and walk, beware especially of sin. This is the very throwing of ourselves into this fire. It is sin which mainly makes us as fuel before this fire: it is upon the account of sin that ever the Lord did break out, to destroy and consume any.

But before we come to the more particular application of those truths, we would obviate some objections that may arise in the heart against them, the clearing whereof may give some light and understanding in the matter in hand.

First, It may be said, that this is legal doctrine, and inconsistent with that boldness in approaching unto God, which is allowed unto his own. To this I answer,

1. It cannot be denied but that such is the weakness and infirmity of the Lord's people, that it is hard for them to distinguish the boundaries betwixt some graces in their actings; so that when the love and favour of God are borne in with power upon their hearts, to the filling of them with joy, it is no easy matter to keep up holy fear in exercise; and when his holiness and majesty are manifested, it is hard not to find some abating of love and delight.

But this floweth from our own infirmity and weakness, and not from any opposition betwixt these two graces. And the infirmity which is the cause of this, is twofold: *First*, The infirmity of grace, and the weakness of the new man even in the best; and their having the old man in some vigour and power yet remaining. This, as it keepeth the best from such an intense and vigorous acting of any grace as is called for, so it disposeth them, to make different graces to clash one against the other. To instance it in the particular in hand—when the Lord by the breathing of his Spirit, and the manifestation of himself, doth draw out the soul to act the grace of holy fear and dread of God, unbelief, which in some measure remaineth with the best, is very ready to render that prejudicial to the acting of faith and love, by misapplying of the discovery of his dreadfulness, unto the stirring up of a doubt of his love and favour unto such vile ones as we are. And on the other hand, when he draweth near to fence the soul with consolations, and the sense of his favour, it is ready to forget itself, and the sense of his greatness—which greatness and majesty of his, though they be nothing abated by his gracious condescension to the soul, yet is the soul ready to esteem it so, because in a great measure even the best are ignorant of God. And therefore it is no wonder, since the best find such a difficulty in reconciling in their thoughts these attributes of God, which to our shallow understanding seem different—as his justice and mercy, majesty and love—that it should also be very hard not to make these graces clash together which act upon these different objects—the attributes of God. But, *secondly*,

The infirmity and weakness of our very constitutions have some influence upon this; for the graces of the Spirit being seated in our souls, and in the actings of them the powers and affections of the soul being increased, it is no wonder, since our souls are not capable of acting strongly with different affections, nor able to entertain an impression of fear and dread in an intense degree, which is not prejudicial unto that of love and joy,—that even upon this account, we are in hazard of making the actings of different graces prejudicial, and in a manner opposite unto one another. But we shall not stand on this.

I answer, 2. That there is no such fear of God called for from the doctrine of his majesty rightly understood, as is any way legal, or opposite unto faith and love: for it is deep heart-reverence and holy awe that are called for, which, as we find in some measure in the kindly affections of children to their parents, is very well consistent with love, and trusting them with the care of all their movements. So also is it very well consistent in the Lord's people with faith in, and love unto him. And therefore, when we read of the fear and fearers of God in scripture, we are not to take it, as holding forth that passion of fear which is an apprehension of some ill coming; but rather, this reverence and holy awe, which may be, where there is no fear of wrath as coming. And so, here, the serving of him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, upon the account of his being a consuming fire, though the exhortation, as it concerns the visible church, ought not to be taken as exclusive of the fear of consuming by him; (since many in the church are enemies to God, and so, are

commanded to fear that, as a mean to make them submit unto him:) yet, as it is an argument pressing the regenerate to reverent service of God, (which is the scope of the Holy Ghost here,) it imports no ground of such an unbelieving fear, in them who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

3. I answer—That though these things, reverence and love, be not inconsistent, yet are we at some times, and in some cases, called more to the exercise of the one than of the other: so that as a disconsolate soul is warranted to be more in the meditation of the mercy, and love, and condescension of God, that thereby the heart may be stirred up to act faith and love, for the removing of that distemper; so, a secure and backslidden saint, is called in such a condition, to the meditation of God's holiness, majesty, and hatred of sin, that thereby he may be stirred up unto repentance, and returning to God. Not but that there is much need of the anointing which washeth all things, to instruct us in the way of duty here; nor that the Lord doth not sometimes recover backslidden souls, (as at first he occasionally converts some,) by a sovereign merciful leading by the bands of love. But we find this the Lord's ordinary way in scripture of dealing with his people, of mixing threatenings with promises, and manifestations of his holiness and justice with those of his mercy; and thus, to distribute to every one their portion. And according to this is his ordinary method with his own, as their experience can testify.

But that we may also answer an objection which may be in the heart, though not avowed—it may be said, That there are not now such proofs of the dread-

fulness of God in his dispensations, as were formerly in the Old Testament, when many immediate judgments were poured out upon sinners.

I answer, 1. Look by faith down to hell, and all such objections would for ever evanish. 2. The Old Testament dispensation of the gospel was administered more in external encouragements and punishments. and the New Testament in spiritual ones; and as the one are more choice and merciful, so the other are more terrible. And if we shall compare the one with the other, we shall find, that it is no less dreadful to approach unto God in the New Testament ordinances. than it was in those of the Old Testament. Look to the Popish church accursed, or the dreadful spiritual plagues that fall on thousands within the Reformed churches, and we shall be forced to say, with the Bethshemites, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

But now, to draw some practical conclusions, for a more particular application of all this:

1. We see what a doleful condition those are in, who are not in Christ, and have no saving interest in this dreadful God. His holy nature makes him hate them; his justice pronounceth sentence against them; his truth and power execute it. Every moment's breath they draw is from his patience. They are as dry stubble before this consuming fire. Oh, if it were but believed, what work upon hearts would it raise!

2. And as it is thus with them, so we should learn to lament over the sins of the Church of God in these days; and over our own hearts, wherein are such evident tokens of the want of, or at best of the weakness. of this holy dread. I shall name only some plain proofs

of it, which as they flow from the want of the due impression of his dreadfulness, so, where it is, they are in a great measure removed—which may both make this grace of fear more desirable, and the want of it more hateful.

1. From this floweth, as a sad proof, the disorderly loose walk of the greatest number of professors. How many fools are there now who make a sport of sin? And what is this, but to sport with a consuming fire? Strict walking with God, keeping up a watch over the heart, ordering the tongue in savoury and edifying discourse, accurate, exact, and circumspect walking, are reduced into notions by the far greater part. And whence floweth all this, but from ignorance of Him with whom we have to do? How rare is the power of religion, and the shining of it, in the conversations of Christians!

2. Consider the manner of worship of many, and examine your own. When many come to pray, they rush irreverently unto the work, and carry themselves so in it as if they were coming to present a compliment, or, at best, to discourse with a man like themselves. How rare is it to feel the heart deeply pressed with the sense of that dreadful majesty to whom they make the address! Come they to hear the word? Many carry themselves as if their only errand were to get a proof of the parts and gifts of the speaker, or to get more brain-knowledge, that they may be more qualified to talk of the matters of God. And oh! how few who take heed how they hear,—who come to get a message delivered to them from the living God, and who tremble at the word! And all this cometh from the want of the due fear of God, who in that ordinance speaks to them. How

do many approach unto God in the sealing ordinance? Holy fear of receiving unworthily, and the dreadful plagues that follow upon it; preparation made conscience of, is not every one's exercise that sitteth down at that holy table. And this floweth from the want of the due impression of this, that it is one of the most solemn approaches that the Lord maketh to us, and that we make unto him. If the fear of taking his name in vain in that ordinance were upon the heart, there would be seen another sort of work in preparing for it than is commonly to be seen.

3. And in as far as heart-exercise may be guessed at, by the manner of walking and of worshipping God, we may lament that in all appearance this is in a great measure gone, and all because of the want of the due fear of God. And in reference to this, I would only pose you with these questions, and let the conscience of every one answer them to the Lord, who speaketh to them from heaven. 1. What find you of a constant care of keeping up constant communion with God, walking as in his sight, taking his law for your rule in all your ways? If this be gone, you are at a great loss: Herein lies a great part of the lively exercise of religion. Take you godliness to be no more than an outwardly blameless conversation and frequenting of the ordinances? This is a gross mistake. 2. If you have convictions of your shortcoming, what do you with them? Do you quench or entertain them? Surely the security and sleeping of many, even within the reach of this consuming fire, doth proclaim that there is little fear of him: fear would set us to our feet, and make us haste to escape. 3. Wherewith do you entertain your affec-

tions throughout the day? What is it that hath the flower of your thoughts in the morning, and the last at night? Is it God? or somewhat which you would be ashamed to name to a man like yourself? How can the fear of God be in that man, we may say, as John of the love of God in another place.

USE.—Since, then, it is so that the want of this due impression of the majesty of God is so evident, and bringeth forth such sad fruits, it is exceedingly of your concernment to endeavour to have this, as you tender the welfare of your souls,—as you would grow up in his way, and bring forth fruit to his praise. They must be at a sad pass who desire not this. And as you would have these deep impressions of the majesty of God,

1. Strive for the knowledge of him. It is the ignorance of God that is the most universal cause of all the sin and misery in the world, and in the church. It is a hard matter to convince many of their ignorance of God; and why? Because they can answer some questions anent his nature, and the persons, and anent his attributes. And yet they demonstrate their ignorance by their want of fear in their walk and worship, for it is impossible to separate the knowledge and fear of God.

2. Remember that both are promised in the well-ordered covenant, and therefore it is your part to plead those gracious promises (Jer. xxxi. and xxxii.; Ezek. xxxvi.), and patiently and believingly wait for the accomplishment of them.

3. Converse much in the serious meditation of him,—a duty which of all is the most clear token of a lively serious Christian. What wonder is it to see

one fearless of God, who doth rush on in his course, as the horse doth into the battle? But let a man set aside some time every day, or in the silent watches of the night, to muse and think again and again of God, and of what is revealed of him in his word and works, and let the heart be exercised therein, and you will find light and life flowing in upon your soul; you will find the holy fear of that glorious One quickening your soul.

4. Beware of every thing which hardeneth your heart against his fear; not only all sin in the general, but those things in particular which you find in experience most to influence your hearts to stupidity. Every soul exercised in searching himself will know what is his own iniquity.

And in all, and with all, be sensible of the work being above your own strength; and that, though you be called to some views of duty, in reference to the obtaining of this fear of God, yet this is only to put you in God's way wherein he ordinarily meeteth his own. But you must be endued with power from on high: there must be an impress of his own hand upon your heart, to bring out this grace to exercise. Pant, therefore, for it, and wait on him, and he will manifest his glory unto you, and stir up this holy fear in you.

# SERMON

## ISAIAH LXIII. 16.

"Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."—Isa. lxiii. 16.

ISAIAH, by the spirit of prophecy, foreseeing the woful captivity that was to come not many years after his death, is here anticipating the due exercise of the godly under it, and wrestling with God for the removal of his wrath, and returning of his merciful favour towards them. His prayer is most fervent (ver. 15), and in this is an argument made use of for pressing the same. The verse contains a confident asserting of God's special interest in that people, even in the view of a formidable-like objection; for understanding whereof, we are to canvass two senses put upon the words. One is, that this hints at the saints in heaven,—their ignorance of what is done below, and how it fareth with God's church. This is ordinarily in this sense used for refuting the fond foundation of prayer to saints in heaven, from their alleged particular knowledge of the state of those on earth; the falsehood of which doctrine, with that of its sandy foundation, may otherwise be solidly concluded, without the drawing of this scripture to a sense that

doth not very natively agree with its scope and drift. The other sense, which we shall confirm, is this,—that the prophet here, in the name of the church, asserteth by faith a gracious interest in God, even when conscience convicteth of a sad unlikeness to their forefathers, to whom this relationship was first graciously granted, and in them to their seed. And that this, and not the other, is consonant to the place is evident, from the pertinency of this sense unto the scope, and the necessity of drawing the other to any convenient sense by some force; for what sense can the latter part have commodiously as an objection against their faith, that they are not acknowledged by Israel? But the conviction of unlikeness to their predecessors in their grace and actings for God, is a strong and forcible objection, which nothing but a strong faith well managed can overcome. This sense agreeth with the acknowledgments of guilt made before and immediately after (ver. 17).

Or we may take both as hinted, and containing this sense: 1. "Thou art our Father; though the worthies with whom thou enteredst first into covenant, and who were faithful therein, are now ignorant and unmindful of us, yet the relation between thee and us stands;" 2. "And though they, if they were alive and saw us, would disown us as their children, because of our great unlikeness to them." (See John viii. 39, 40.) And since the two words of "ignorance" and "not acknowledging of them" give some ground for this larger sense, we shall take it.

In the verse there is, 1. A confident assertion of an interest in God as our Father, made by the prophet in his own name and in that of the people of

God. 2. The objections in the said passage, whereof this assertion is owned, "Though our worthy forefathers be both ignorant of us, and if they knew us would disown us, for our unlikeness to them." 3. A returning to the former assertion of faith, with further enlargement and confirmation from this,—" Our Redeemer," and his "everlasting name."

We shall briefly touch at something, from the general scope and connection of the words with the preceding and following.

Observ. A special interest in God is a sufficient warrant for asking of him any suitable and needful blessing. If you ask the prophet's reason for his bold-like expostulation and prayers (ver. 15), his answer is here: "What wonder that children expect the sounding of their father's bowels toward them in distress?" (See Psalm xviii. 1, 2, 3, 6.) Christ's preface to the pattern of prayer hints this.

We need not stand to shew what is a special interest in God, especially, being to speak of the nature of that particular expression of it which is here used. It is a covenant relation. But to prove and confirm you in the faith of this, is our first work.

1. This special interest in God secures by promise and right all that is needful for his people; nay, I may say, by begun possession; for, 1st, He that hath an interest in God hath an interest in all blessings, for all are in him as the fountain, and all stream natively from him. He is all in all; he alone makes up all wants, (Psalm lxxiii. 26). 2d, This interest is yet further secured in all blessings, by the large promises of that covenant whereof this interest in God is the main and fundamental article. 3d, And this

is yet further secured by the infinite faithfulness and power of the Promiser.

2. The Lord commands and allows this improvement of an interest in him, and commends it when done. He reveals himself in all his excellencies, that his people may live upon him, and giveth the pledge of his promises that they may live by them, and gain by trading on them. (See Jer. iii. 19.)

USE.—1. Then this interest is of exceeding value, since it is a relevant warrant for such pleadings. How would men value such an interest in a king as might warrant them to ask any thing within the compass of his limited power? If they that want it knew its value, they would not live without it; and if they that have it knew it better, they would lead a better life, and a more comfortable.

2. Labour to keep the faith of this clear, if you would be in a good case for prayer, and prevailing with God therein. I shall name now only this good help to keep the faith of an interest clear, and it is, a constant diligence in the study of walking suitably to an interest in him. Nay, suppose there were unbelieving doubtings about our interest in him, yet this care of performing the duties lying on one who hath an interest, will be found a safe, ready, and speedy way for putting an end to such unbelieving debates. As, for instance, suppose thou question thy interest in God as thy Father, yet study to render him that love, reverence, and obedience that a child oweth, and it will not be long a dispute with thee.

Two things may be objected against this practice: one, against its lawfulness; another, against the hope-

fulness of its succeeding. And though it may anticipate what is to be spoken on this purpose, yet it is not impertinent to the clearing up of this offered help, especially since we cannot reach the subject at this time.

*First,* For its lawfulness. 1. Commands of God clear it up. Love, and fear, and all due obedience, are exacted lawfully and by divine authority of them that are not in a gracious relation to him. All that the godly ought to do by virtue of their gracious relation to God, the ungodly are under commands to do them also, though in the due order and method of divine prescription; otherwise, want of an interest in God should be an excuse for the greatest part of the bold rebellions of sinners against God.

2. Common relations to God exact, as due from men, the same dutiful behaviour towards God, which a more special interest hath a more effectual way of obliging the godly unto. And, therefore, we find the Lord pressing men to their duty from such common relations, and the godly making special use of such sometimes, when a more special interest hath been darkened, (Job x. 8, 9; Psalm cxix. 93): sometimes in a holy delightful reckoning of all their relations to God; for a wise believer looks on none of them as contemptible, (Psalm cxxxix. 14).

*Secondly,* For its hopefulness of succeeding to the clearing up of a gracious interest in God, these things make somewhat:

1. That walking answerably unto a common relation or an honest study thereof, can hardly be found in any who hath not a special interest in God. The Lord will have a fair quarrel even with them that have no other relation to him, but as he is their maker

and maintainer, that they have not duly obeyed him, (Rom. i. 20, 21).

2. Commonly the darkness of our knowledge of our special interest in God proceeds from the feebleness of our endeavours to answer the duties of such a relation, as the sad experience of many on the one hand doth confirm it; and, on the other, the experiences of the diligent hand testify, that it was the way to enrich them with assurance of their interest, as well as with the possession of other special blessings.

In handling of the words, we shall first handle the objection that the prophet's faith triumphs over, in itself: and so, the order of our discourse shall be on these heads—1. The deceased godly are unacquainted with the state of the survivors. 2. The posterity of them whose privileges they enjoy, may be very unlike their predecessors. 3. Convictions of both may stand with a strong faith. 4. Assurance of a special interest in God may be attained by the people of God.

Observ. 1. The godly deceased are ignorant of the state of the survivors. It is said of the wicked, that they know not the lot of their posterity, (Job xiv. 21). Concerning the godly, the scripture speaks not expressly. But the truth of this may be confirmed,

1. From the silence of scripture about their knowledge of affairs done below, which at least should limit the vanity of men in asserting the contrary as an article of faith, especially, on so fond a foundation as that "glass of the Trinity" that the Papists talk of, wherein they behold such things, and for so idolatrous an end, as the giving them the worship due to God and Jesus Christ.

2. It may be hinted and guessed at by their happy

state, wherein they are settled. If the knowledge of the sins of others, especially of their relations and posterity, was so grievous to them when on earth, and encompassed with sin, how probable is it that this knowledge would be far more grievous to them, when perfectly sanctified? But if it be said, that sanctified and pure affection would allay this grief, as it will in the day of judgment, when they see vengeance executed on them; the answer is, that the cases are not alike, since there is a difference between sin, and acts of justice for it; God's glory is in the one, and his dishonour in the other.

3. This their ignorance may be concluded, from the probable incapacity they are at for knowing it. Their distance from, and want of converse with the inhabitants of the world, and the inability of the soul for attaining such knowledge without nearness and converse, may say more against it, than can be said for it; for the alleging of any extraordinary mean of knowing, ought not to be produced without warrant from the word, or sound reason deduced from thence. Hence it cannot be so denied of angels, who are often about their Master's work on earth.

4. This their ignorance of the state of survivors may be guessed at, by the impertinency and uselessness of such a sort of knowledge. If it can be proved that such a knowledge is useless, there is good reason to deny it. Now, it cannot be useful to them, for their work and labour ceaseth, (Rev. xiv. 13); and so, interceding with God for the survivors, since it is evidently a labour, is not probably their exercise; and unprofitable knowledge is not suited to their state. Yet to speak on such a dark subject with sobriety and moderation, without any peremptory de-

termination, since the scripture's voice is not peremptory therein, these things we offer to your thoughts:

1. It is probable that what the saints knew when in life, of the state of the church and people of God, they remember in heaven, since it is unreasonable to think, that by the glorified state of the godly there is any impairment in their natural faculties, but rather an increase.

2. They know certainly, that they, and the rest of the people of God with them in heaven and on earth, are not yet full partakers of all the blessings that their Lord purchased for them; and it is likely that they want not holy and happy desires of full faith, for the perfection thereof, both in themselves and others, and in vengeance on their enemies, (see Rev. vi. 9, 10); though it be not safe to build doctrines peremptorily on such dark prophetic places, (see Rom. viii. 19, 22); albeit that also is a dark place.

3. It is not improbable that the bright displaying of the glory of Christ's kingdom, in some eminent acts of mercy to his church, and judgment on his enemies, may be manifest to them, (See Rev. xviii. 20, and xix. 1, 6, 8), and the way that this hastens the wished-for day of the Lord. But these are but conjectures, and as such I deliver them, leaving to every one a liberty to dissent according as they apprehend the foundation to be weak on which they are built. But the former grounds against any particular knowledge of particular persons and states, have more solidity.

USE.—1. You that have relations whose special welfare you desire, labour *now* to know their state,

and to be helpful to them; for death will put you out of the reach of knowing how it is with them, or of helping them if you knew it.

2. Then look upon your godly friends deceased as lost to you, as to any immediate usefulness; their example, and their precepts, and warnings, may still have force; but as to them, you now stand on your own legs, and want the props of the help and comforts of their sympathy.

3. Then learn to lament the more the loss of godly men. It is a gain to themselves, for they exchange earth for heaven; a sort of gain to Jesus Christ (if we may so speak of him), who is our only gain in life and death, (Phil. i. 21), who gains a glorified holy member, for a sinful defiled one; a gain to the church invisible, in that its number is the nearer being filled up. But to the church militant, it is a loss, and a considerable one; which should stir us up to turn our complaints into prayers, that God would fill up the want, by the converting of others, and increasing his grace on the survivors.

Observ. 2. The posterity of them whose privileges they enjoy, may be so unlike their predecessors, as that they may deserve to be disowned by them: though Israel be the "prince with God," he might disown us, as being not Israel, though of Israel. (See Rom. ix. 6, 32, 33).

In handling of this sad truth, the multitudes of instances of unlikeness will go far to prove it. And this we shall confirm, not so much from the unlikeness of Israel or Judah at this time that the prophet speaks of, but of our unlikeness to our predecessors whose privileges we enjoy. Amongst these predecessors of ours, we shall—1. Name the worthies in the text

and the Old Testament saints; for we Gentiles are their posterity, not by natural generation (and if so, it were a very small matter, if it go alone,) but by a gracious implantation. (See Rom. xi. 17, 22, 24, and Rom. iv. 11.) Abraham is called the Father of all believers, by the eminent room he had in the church, as a pattern of faith.

2. The primitive Christians are our predecessors, whose privileges we enjoy, and the same administration of the gospel that was first delivered unto them.

3. Our predecessors are the generation of Christians in these lands, the fruits of whose blood, and sufferings, and venturous actings for the gospel, we now enjoy in some measure.

And we shall compare ourselves with them for these ends:

1. That there may be some mention unto the Lord's praise of his mighty acts, and effects of his grace on the generation foregoing. And it is a great part of our work to shew forth his praise this way. (See Psalms, clxv. 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12.)

2. To preserve and send forth the savour of the name of the righteous, that it may be had in everlasting remembrance, (Heb. xi. 4).

3. Because such comparisons are very humbling, as well as chastening and convincing.

4. To stir up and encourage from this conviction unto more faithful and painful walking with God, since attainments of saints do hold forth what is attainable.

To begin then with the first sort—the Old Testament saints—and to clear up how justly we may be disowned by them as their successors; before we speak

of our unlikeness to them as to duty, we must shew their unlikeness to us as to privileges—and this will aggravate the case to our disadvantage sadly.

1. The revelation of the mind of God was far more sparing and dark to them, than to us, (Heb. i. 1, 2). Here a little, and there a little, did they receive thereof: but the water of the sanctuary, which to them was by showers, or a little river, is to us a sea of knowledge of God's will.

2. Their ordinances were far more dark and carnal than ours, so that it is called " the letter," (2 Cor. iii.), and ours that " of the Spirit."

3. The church made up of them, was a little inclosure of a few Jewish families at first—at best and greatest, but of one nation, and a few proselytes out of the heathen—whereas the church is now diffused through many nations, and many benefits flow from its multitude. For all these their disadvantages in point of privilege, we are at more disadvantages in point of duty and attainments, and sadly unlike to them in these particulars.

4. The scope of the historical part of the Bible, is not to give us any full account of the graces and excellencies of the Old Testament saints, but only in occasional hints now and then (except in the book of Psalms); whereby we may charitably conclude, that there were many more excellent things found with them, than are recorded. But for ourselves, we may know all.

5. In the deep providence of God, they were winked at in many things, which now, the express revelation of God's will makes intolerable. This I name, for the obviating of the prejudice that is usually entertained, by reading of their failings, espe-

cially in polygamy, and in marrying of near relations. It may be almost said, that uncharitable undervaluing of them on the account of such weaknesses, proceeding mainly from the ignorance of God's mind in them, is a greater guilt in us, than their falling was to them.

6. In general, the church was then a minor, and in bondage, (Galat. iv. 1, 2, 3).

Our sad unlikeness to them, I shall branch it forth, first from the two in the text; and then, from some others elsewhere famous in the word.

Abraham. This is the father of the faithful, honoured with the name of "the friend of God;" whose children we may be ashamed to reckon ourselves, for our unlikeness to him,

1. In his faith and confidence in God's promise, (Rom. iv. 19, 20). His faith was seen in his obedience in going out of his own land, to a strange country; in expecting posterity, when, by the course of nature, it was impossible; in his universal obedience unto divine commands that crossed the promise. But for us, we are commonly in this case; 1. A promise, with a great prop from sense, is some stay to the soul, but none without it. 2. Hence is our obedience as narrow, as our faith is feeble. Let it not be said that he was sure the promise was made to him, whereas our doubting proceeds from our questioning our right to the promise; for this is but a delusion of Satan and of our own hearts, as is proved, *first*, In that general and unlimited promises in the word, are as good as the most particular that can be desired; and, *secondly*, The trial, when seriously managed, will produce a discovery, that it is the truth of the promise that is the real question

in the heart, whatever else for the fashion be pretended. And though serious searching may discover this to any, yet I add these confirmations of it; 1. Probabilities of accomplishment satisfy the soul in its alleged faith, more than discoveries of our right to the promise, or of the faithfulness of the promise; and when these are wanting, ofttimes nothing can stay the heart. 2. There is ofttimes gross unbelief felt in resting on promises of outward provision, when the right to them is not so much in question. What the causes of this treachery are, deserveth a more exact inquisition: but we shall not insist further on it at this time, than this—that the grounds of unbelief are here most visible, and the desires of the heart most fervent; and therefore, it is the harder to be stayed. 3. That promises which have a general reference to the church, and Christ its head, and exaltation of his kingdom, are hardly satisfying to many, though they be most clear, (Psalm cx.), when outward appearances are wanting. Yea, in this, eminent saints have failed, as Baruch and Elijah, (Jerem. xlv, 1 Kings xix).

2. We are unlike to Abraham our father, in his bold and reverent familiarity with God. He walked with him, and dealt with him, with a most sweet mixture of these true qualities: witness that brave pleading for Sodom, (Genes. xviii). But we are commonly on the one or other extreme, of presumption or discouraging diffidence, and are commonly tossed from the one to the other in our exercises, and rarely preserve both in an equal mixture. Witness, 1. Our common strange way of approaching to him, either as a terrible adversary, or one so high above us, that there is no sort of familiarity allowable. Men often-

times in the beginning of their prayers, use such prefaces, as if their acquaintance with God were just then a making. 2. The predominion of fear, of unbelieving fear, when the heart is in any serious temper; as of vanity and lightness at other times.

Object. 1. But the Lord conversed with Abraham ofttimes in a visible shape, (as Gen. xviii.), and therefore his boldness was better founded. Ans. 1. Do you think that that shape, and manner of appearance, did abate aught in that holy man of the reverent awe of God which was on his heart, in more special approaches to him? 2. We have God dwelling in our nature in Jesus Christ, whereof that was but a prelude—which warrants this familiarity in a high measure of faith. (See Gal. iv. 1–6.) This makes a great change to our advantage, and gives great ground for familiarity.

Object. 2. But is it not evident that God calls for fear and awe; and his excellency and his holiness are enough to make us keep at a great distance? Ans. Since it is so, he is so great and glorious, that unless he had prepared a way for coming to him, and obliged us by his command to take and use it, it had been presumption to have approached with this familiarity. But there is little true reverence in making respect a plea for disobedience. Think you that God's dwelling in our nature in Christ—that the privilege of adoption to which we are brought by him—that the free spirit of children in our hearts, and the Lord's express commands to boldness and freedom, in improving of his usefulness for us engaged by promises—that these are not warrants sufficient to embolden us?

Object. 3. But how shall we mix them? 1· Mix

them often in your meditations and thoughts of God, and you will find such a mixed frame. 2. Give the predominant care to keep from that extreme to which, by nature, or temptation, or special weakness, you are most inclined. 3. Do what you can to maintain such thoughts of God which you are helped unto, when admitted most into his fellowship—such thoughts as influence grace most, and render your pleadings most savoury to yourself, when in a specially reflecting frame, and most acceptable to him. 4. Study faith and tender walking. It is an evil conscience that makes men entertain strange thoughts of God oftentimes.

The second instance is Israel: Jacob, that man of manifold afflictions and trials, forced to flee from his father's house, afflicted by his father-in-law, pursued by his brother, grieved about his children, and at length driven to Egypt with his family, and there dieth. The Lord's people from him are commonly called Israel. This holy man is eminent for his wrestling with God. Gen. xxxii. 26; Hos. xii. 3, 4, where it seems he was so mighty in bodily and spiritual exercise combined. He hath his refuge unto God in a great strait; and when opportunity is offered, he behaveth princely (as the word is) in it—not like unto our faint, cold, languid desires, scarcely worth the name of prayers, let alone of wrestlings. 1. We, if there be difficulty in the work, are ready to give over, and to wait for a better time. It is special valour to wrestle, which implies opposition. 2. A few cold wishes will serve the turn with us, but he could spend a night in wrestling. 3. Opposition from our own unbelieving hearts will discourage us; but such, from God himself, doth not put him off his

duty. 4. If we perform the duty in any tolerable manner, we are satisfied; but nothing but a blessing will satisfy him. Oh! who is it that wrestles long, and gives not over, if it were a whole night, till he get the blessing?

I shall now add unto these two famous instances, some few things, wherein we are far inferior to the saints of old.

1. In living as strangers and pilgrims, albeit the promises of the future life after death were more shadowy than they are unto us. (See Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13.) This continued in Jacob (Genes. xlvii. 9), and even in David's time, when God's people were settled in Canaan (Psalm xxxix. 13, and cxix. 19; 1 Chron. xxix. 15). But we are as settled inhabitants, with fond hearts, purposes, hopes, and endeavours, laid out on worldly things.

2. We are unlike them in zeal for God, and his glory, word, ordinances, sabbath, and worship. How bitter were their lamentations for the Lord's withdrawing; how bold their testifyings against all courses of defection from God, often with great danger to themselves! As for us, we are well satisfied with dishonour done to God, if there be no real immediate hurt to ourselves: yea, if our own petty enjoyments be secured, there is little moan made for the calamity of others, and the uncertainty of the case of posterity.

3. We are unlike to them in longing for the Messiah's coming. They longed, watched, and prayed for his first coming; but we, little, for his second coming. Though that degenerate generation amongst whom he came did not know him, and handled him as a deceiver, yet many and fervent were the longings of their fathers for him.

Our next predecessors are the primitive Christians, whose posterity we are yet unworthy to be reckoned, though we enjoy their privileges; yea, in that point, have advantages above them.

1. In the first age, immediately after Christ's ascension, there was the great affliction of Christ's removal from them, the greatest trial that ever a poor company of believers were tried with, as may be guessed at, by Christ's using so many words of comfort against it. Whereas it is long since he went away, and it is the nearer by so much to his second coming.

2. They had the Jewish temple and ceremonies yet standing, though dead, yet not decently buried; which bred them no small temptations and trials amongst themselves and from enemies. (See Rom. xiv.)

3. The New Testament dispensation of the gospel and the doctrines thereof, delivered to them by word of mouth from the apostles and evangelists, and all the proofs thereof drawn from the Old Testament, which needed a great portion of the Spirit in the dispensers, as it was afforded to them. Whereas we have their doctrine consigned to writing by themselves, and that through the Spirit's direction.

4. And then, and immediately after, there was the great scandal of the cross of Christ—a man lately put to death as a malefactor! Whereas we have this confirmed to us by all the wonderful effects that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, this doctrine hath since had in the world.

5. A most stubborn hatred against the very name of Christianity, rooted by the devilish idolatry of the world and the power of the Roman monarchy arrayed against them. Whereas now it is not so in any place,

though the purity and reality of profession be yet persecuted, and it is likely will ever be in some measure.

It is true they had advantages above us in other respects, which did help sufficiently to balance these disadvantages. But we are sadly unlike them,

1. In their wonderful charitableness to their poor brethren, (Acts ii. 44, 45). Great were their expenses in supplying the apostles and others, in their great travels in advancing the gospel; many strong proofs did they give that their hearts were detached from this world, and bound in love to the brethren. But for our charity, it is evident, that, take away the laws of a well-governed land for the provision of the poor, and the reputation of the profession which stands in giving somewhat on charitable occasions, if all were left to free-will offerings, charity would amount to a small sum.

2. Their mutual love, and harmony, and union, which, considering all things, was a wonderful grace; to-wit, the great extent the church was speedily enlarged into, the diversity and multitudes of nations and languages of professors, and the great line of separation which God himself had made, and for many ages continued between Jew and Gentile. But now, not only Christians of one nation, but of one congregation, do rarely live in love and peace.

3. Their great, and cheerful, and patient sufferings, and their forgiving spirit. Persecutors themselves were sometimes wearied with them for the cheerfulness of their sufferings: they were often in an excess about it, and rushed upon death through the faith of the glory and reward of sufferings. But for us, a little fining is more heavily taken than death was by

them; and suffering even for a good cause, is commonly reckoned no small calamity.

4. Their great and constant pains in promoting the gospel, and spreading the name of Jesus through the world, which the Lord blessed with a wonderful success. But these advents are gone. Nations professing Christianity even in some purity, manage trade with the heathen and infidels, for advancing the interest of riches; but how little that of religion is minded, no man can be so blind as not to see it, and every tender heart ought to regret it as a sad degeneracy.

Not to bring in the instances of the apostles, in one of whom—Paul—we may find enough to put us all to the blush; whose pains, and prayers, and tears, and travels, and work, and sufferings, in advancing the gospel as a minister, and honouring it as a Christian, are so high, that many may think them rather matter of admiration than of imitation, though he expressly, by the Holy Ghost, enjoins this last, (1 Cor. xi. 1)—predecessors are nearer to us—the worthies that lived before us in this land, about the time of the Reformation from Popery, who were also under great disadvantages in respect of us, though they also have gone far beyond us. As, 1. The darkness they were in as to many points of doctrine, and especially about the worship and government of God's house, which the Lord hath since clearly revealed from the word. 2. The smaller measure of the gifts of praying and preaching which were then dispensed, as it may be evident, in comparing what is on record of their labours, with what is common now. 3. The great and universal opposition of the church in those days, unto the truths they professed, and to themselves, a

preachers and professors thereof. The Popish doctrines then were but a coming to the light, and the light but a growing for the discovery thereof. 4. The rareness of the scriptures themselves, which were kept from the people by unworthy bishops, and bloody laws. Yet under all these disadvantages, we are far outstripped by them.

1. In their stedfast suffering for such truths as were neither so much cleared up as either they are now, or as such are which have been the trial of this generation, neither were always fundamental; yet they did adhere to them at all hazards, and many, to the loss of their lives in a cruel manner.

2. In their great valuing of the smallest means of grace, even the bare reading of the word. Oh! if there were such an edge on professors as was then, ministers would have other sort of congregations to preach unto.

3. In their honest plainness and sincerity in walking up to their light. They were not detainers of the truth of God in unrighteousness, as so many are, who are owners of knowing heads, and unholy hearts; heads full of light, but hearts void of true spiritual life, and sense, and tenderness. Oh, how many apes are there, and imitators of these worthies in the land! How many counterfeiting their outward carriage, while crossing their doctrine; and most professing their doctrine, while hating their practice.

One great objection I must remove for the rendering this sad comparison the more humbling and convincing, and for preparing our way for application; and it is this, That all these predecessors of ours had singular helps and advantages above us, which make the case very different: As, 1. The Old Testament

saints had extraordinary means of converse with God, whereof we are now deprived. 2. The New Testament saints had an extraordinary measure of the Spirit. 3. Our immediate predecessors had also a great measure of this, suited to their emergencies and work. I answer, as to the first, Extraordinary manifestations of God by visions, dreams, and oracles, are no such great advantages as we commonly think, who are deprived of them. 1. Ungodly men had them, so that they are not in themselves sanctifying things: Cain, Balaam, Saul, a number of the most ungodly had them. 2. They were not constant, but now and then. 3. Oftentimes they were attended with great terrors on the godly that met with them, and terrible fears of death; and therefore, were nothing comparable to that soft and calm voice of the Spirit speaking clearly in the word.

2. As to that extraordinary measure of the Spirit that the New Testament saints had, a great part of it was for the increase of gifts, and giving other gifts of tongues and miracles useful in that age. But true holiness was still conveyed in the same way, and increased by the same means that now it is. And thereof further we find, that there were no small numbers of hypocrites and apostates found amongst them, even in the best of those days which the church ever beheld.

So that take all things together, and we shall find, 1. That the advantages that Christians had of old, are balanced by others which we possess. 2. That the main grounds on which they walked, and by which they attained to such eminency, are the same that we have: God himself to study, and know, and converse with—the covenant of peace between him and

them that emboldened them in all their addresses to him—means especially of prayer, whereby to obtain all blessings from him, according to his promises—a rule of his will for a rule of their walk, wherein we may say, by reason of the great light we enjoy, that we are not inferior unto any of the generations of the saints—the same grace to animate and strengthen—and the same recompence of reward.

# THREE SERMONS

ON

## MATTHEW VII. 13, 14.

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## SERMON I.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—MATT. VII. 13, 14.

THE exhortation of my text is unto the main duty of Christianity and religion, to make sure of salvation; wherein heaven and salvation are represented to us as the end of a journey, and a palace to be entered into by a particular gate. The motives are enwrapped together, *first*, from the multitude that take the more easy way unto destruction; *secondly*, from the great difficulty there is in taking, finding, and keeping the way that leads to life; which is a cause, that both few seek it, and many take up with what is more easy.

We need not to stand to speak of Christ's wisdom, in speaking of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in parables. It was his constant custom, and a blessed pattern it is; and happy are they that have, by his Spirit, a gift of making the things of God plain,

by such similitudes. It is a way that hath these advantages: 1. It makes things plain, when the similitudes are apt and pertinent, for it brings them down to people's senses by sensible and obvious things. 2. It hath a very native influence of taking with the fancy and affections, as hath been successfully practised by all the great orators and masters of persuasion. 3. It sticks in the memory, even as the sight of a man's picture makes one remember him better than the description of his person, or an account of his name. 4. It promotes heavenly-mindedness. The many parables in scripture from sowing, and fishing, and planting, and building, and walking, and running, and fighting, may, and ought to bring spiritual subjects to our thoughts, when we see or hear of such things. Two faults in this matter are carefully to be avoided. 1. Light and trifling similitudes or resemblances, that may reflect on the gravity of divine matters. 2. Too hard and strait pressing of them. They serve only for illustrating, and not for proving, and are not to be pressed beyond their scope and drift.

The other thing we shall speak of in general is this, that even Christ himself is much and often speaking in his ministry, of the rousing and awakening subjects in religion; as the fewness of the saved, the difficulty of salvation, and the hardness of the labour required about our soul's eternal welfare. And if Christ be much on this subject, then, his servants should take laws of him, and imitate his practice, and hear such doctrine gladly, especially since, 1. Nothing is more profitable, than to prevent a cheat in your eternal state; and this is its design; and this cheat is usually carried on by such a principle as this, that salvation is

common and easy. 2. Nothing is more suitable, since these heart-plagues and accursed principles are sown in the heart of every man by natural corruption, and watered by the devil's temptations. And, 3. It is specially useful and seasonable in such a time of trying and stumbling, when we may see the shells of many a wrecked professor.

And to enforce this subject on your thoughts, as a preparative to the hearing of it, consider some things in Christ's pressing it, which make it far more weighty.

1. He came down from heaven, in the purest and strongest love to fallen sinners, and gave unquestionable proofs of it. Surely, then, he would not lay unnecessary burdens on them. Many a burden that we could not bear, he bore on himself, and leaves none in the room thereof but what is simply needful, (Matt. xi. 28, 29, 30).

2. He knew better than any, both the number of the saved, and the difficulty of salvation: he knew his own little flock, and all the hardships they were to endure, so that his testimony is yet more to be weighed.

3. Never was any in his name more full and large in offers general and unlimited of a right to him, and in promises of salvation by him, (Matt. xi. 28, 29; John vii. 37, and v. 40).

4. In his own ministry, he was generally sweet and alluring, according as is hinted in Matt. xi. 16, 20. He was not a severe John Baptist, but was a kind tender-hearted pastor.

5. He knew men's hearts best. Ministers guess by their own experience and the word; but he hath an immediate view of men's hearts, and therefore, his

testimony, both concerning their duty, difficulty, and danger, is far more weighty.

6. He was the clear discoverer, and mainly the author of the way to heaven. He had infinite mercy in preparing it, suitable wisdom to know it, and all authority to determine it, as the only way that all must take and follow.

7. We may speak also of his own experience in this matter; that though his case was singular, both as to his difficulties and assistance, yet even this is proposed to us, as a moving pattern for our imitation. (Heb. v. 7, and xii. 2, 3). If the heir of heaven, by birthright, did enter therein through much hardship, much more are we to lay our account with the like.

Let us therefore, from these things, be stirred up to hear what our Lord teacheth us in this plain exhortation; which for the more orderly handling of the matter, passing the order of the words, we shall reduce to these heads: 1. There are two different states that all mankind enter into after this life; the one is called life, the other destruction. 2. There are two different ways that lead thither. 3. It fares with men as to their eternal state, according to the way in which they walk in this life. 4. The difference of the ways is the cause of the difference of the numbers that walk in them. And then, after the handling of these, we shall come closer unto the exhortation given by our Lord, with its grounds.

Observ. 1. There are two different states of all mankind after this life, and no more. Many different states are there in this life as to our outward concernments of body, mind, or other interests; but the greatest of all is that which is the true emblem of this—even the state of men's souls, in peace or en-

mity with God. This is commonly acknowledged, and the inference is plain in it, both in its predictions (Rom. ii. 5, 6, 7; 2 Thess. i. 8, 9), and in the account of the form of the judgment to come, (Matt. xxiv. 34, 41, 46). That there are but two is also evident, both from the scripture's silence of any others, and the peremptoriness of the grounds of men's being determined and sent to these, even as they are found in the first or second Adam. That they are different states, is commonly acknowledged, yea, the difference is vast, and greater than being and not being.

USE.—This plain truth calls more for application unto consciences, than any great pains in informing the mind about it. This calls for,

1. Frequent and serious meditation of it. Men think often too much on any change in their condition, if it be but probable, whether sad or joyful; but this certain and great change hath little room in your thoughts. You sometimes want matter of meditation: here is that which may still be fresh—a great, certain, speedy, eternally-lasting change that is to pass upon you. Suppose a great prince is sending for you all, to carry you into a strange land, where some of you shall be miserable slaves, and others advanced to great state and dignity,—if I may thus allude to the proud king's commission. (See Isaiah xxxvi. 16, 17.)

2. Undervaluing, and thinking little of your other present states. They are all but trifles in comparison of this. Present states are but small, future are uncertain. It is sadly strange, though very common, to see people living in this world as they were never to leave it, and minding a future state as if they will

never be in it—so common is it to see gross unbelief veiled with fair and full professions of belief.

3. In thinking which of the two shall be yours. If there were many, or if the difference between the two were small, this meditation were the less needful: but now it is so necessary, that, indeed, it is inseparable from the real and serious belief of the truth. To help you in this,

Observ. 2. There are two different ways wherein all men walk toward this different state. We shall not urge any difference between the way and the gate, since the words are parabolical, and the inquiry seems neither sober nor profitable. One way leads not unto both, or either. The ways are as far different in their kinds as the states are in theirs; yea, the difference is that of contrariety and opposition. Not to speak of the difference named in the text, reserving it unto the particular notes, but of that which is proper and elsewhere in the word—ways are distinguished mainly thus, 1. From that which the walker leaves; 2. That which he aims at and approaches to—as is known in familiar talking of such things. Now, these ways differ in both exceedingly. He that walks in the way to life, leaves sin, the world, and its vanities, and draws near unto God, pursues after holiness and communion with God; the other walks, by a leaving of God more and more, for, being born with his back towards God, though he be often called on, he returns not, but goes on in pursuing after vanity and a happiness in somewhat besides God. (See Heb. x. 38, 39.) So that the ways differ exceedingly, not to speak of the different rule by which they walk, and other differences handled from Romans viii. 1, 4.

Only take it in a few plain words—1. The godly man's way is in a course of communion with God in Jesus Christ; the wicked's way is in estrangement from him: this they love and pursue, (1 John i. 3; Psalm lxxiii. 25, and xvi. 7, 8). 2. The one, in a study of conformity to him in holiness; the other, to a conformity unto the world in vanity, (Rom. xii. 2). 3. The one, in a way of faith and trusting God; the other, in unbelief, and resting all upon the force of sense and reason. Now, that these differ, is no question, and that there are no other ways wherein men walk, but in one of these, is evident. What may be said of infants, and such as are without the church, is another question, which belongs not to our purpose.

USE.—But here comes the most needful question, Which of these ways do *we* walk in? We cannot walk in both, no more than be in both states hereafter. To enforce this,

Observ. 3. It fares with men as to their endless state, according to the way they take and walk in now. This is already cleared in its grounds and proofs. (See Rom. ii. 5, 6, 7.) It is not more unsuitable unto God's goodness and faithfulness to send a holy believing soul into hell, than it is to his holiness, justice, and truth, to bring an unholy unbeliever to heaven. So that here, the gate is shut by dreadful bars against the presumption of the unholy man, and is shut in mercy against the fears of a holy tender believer. You may then hence know what shall be your future state, if you can find out your present way.

Observ. 4. There is a great difference betwixt the numbers of the walkers in these different ways. There is a great train in the one, and but a few in

the other, as is commonly testified in the word; yet is this to be understood only comparatively, for even the godly, considered by themselves, make up a vast multitude. (See Rev. vii. 9.) And, that we may consider this first as a caution of the other, these things shew that they are a great number who enter into life:

1. The price that was laid down was surely for some considerable purchase—that though there be still an infinite disproportion between the infinite price and the purchase, yet, surely, it was laid down for the remission of the sins of many.

2. Of this sort have some been in all ages since righteous Abel; since men began to "call upon the name of the Lord," (Gen. iv. 26), wherein Adam himself hath been priest and prophet, to this day have there been always some walking in the way to life.

3. Consider what a great harvest was gathered in after that blessed heat and rain of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, so that even of the Jews (Acts xxi. 20) there are many thousands, and many more of the Gentiles.

4. Consider what a great cloud of witnesses for the truth, by sufferings, there has been in many ages and countries, even of sufferers unto death, of whom all charity commands to believe, that they entered into life, according to Christ's promise made to sufferers for his name's sake.

5. Consider how largely the gospel hath been spread by the mercy of the Lord's blessing on his servants. See but of one man (Rom. xv. 19). Even in the apostles' days, the church was greatly spread; and more, thereafter, throughout all the Roman empire,

a great part of Asia and Africa. And this sheweth there were great numbers, in that days of the spreading of the light of the gospel, use to be times of its power; and that the Lord still hath some to gather in, or ripen, where it is continued.

And particularly as to the place of the world we live in, if we consider, 1. The long time the gospel hath been amongst us; 2. The many rich gifts he hath bestowed on his servants; 3. The rare acts of providence in preserving, as well as in bringing in the gospel amongst us; 4. The multitude of professors tolerably blameless; 5. The many godly parents that have a godly posterity, as a witness from heaven against the men who say that children are out of God's covenant, and deny the duty of instructing them; we may safely conclude, that there is a considerable number in the land that shall enter into life, as there are many already entered therein.

Having thus cautioned this truth, we shall now confirm it in that only sense wherein it is true, and wherein here it is asserted: and it is observable, that it is commonly spoken by way of comparison, as here, either with them that perish, or of the sincere with hypocritical professors, (Matt. xxii, 14, and xx, 16). And though it be commonly acknowledged, yet because it is not duly pondered, we shall lay forth the truth of it before you from these considerations.

1. Consider what a vast multitude is deprived of the very means of the knowledge of the way to heaven. Alas! the Bible is in but a few languages. Many millions of sinners have never heard Christ's name, and never had the messengers of peace proclaiming salvation to them in his name. A subject of very sad meditation is this. Many worshipping

sun, moon, and stars, and the devil himself in a visible and deformed shape—their case is hopeless, and so hath it been for many generations, and likely so to be, till the Lord wonderfully appear for their delivery from the snare of the devil.

2. Consider what a great number of those that have any thing of the means of salvation, have them so mixed and corrupted, that there is little success, and little hope thereof. These corruptions are, 1. In doctrine; where, as Paul speaks, they corrupt the simplicity of Christ's gospel by their human inventions; as the Popish church, which has the Bible, but bound up from the people; Christ as Mediator preached, but saints joined therein with him; justification by faith, but by conjoined works; hell and heaven taught, but purgatory added thereunto. Now, where such doctrines are taught, there is little hope of any sound conversion to be wrought thereby. 2. Corruptions in worship, which when great, render it altogether unacceptable. Prayer is offered unto God, but through idols; sacraments are lamentably corrupted, and mutilated, and clouted with men's foolish inventions; and that of the Lord's Supper turned into the most abominable and ridiculous idolatry in the world—to worship a bit of bread, and immediately to eat it, and yet, that, as the real substantial body of Jesus Christ. Now, what hope is there of any communion with God, or communication of grace from Christ, in such ways of worship? Besides, their public prayers and service in an unknown tongue, and thus, the common people are deprived of the hearing of the word read, which in such a case, is more valuable than all their preaching. 3. Corruptions in government and discipline, which in this

case of the Papists are so great, that they render their salvation yet more hopeless: As, 1. The whole frame of that Babel stands upon the pretended infallibility of their church, which is the very root of that wicked kingdom. And this being more carefully taught than any of the fundamentals of religion, and easily believed by a people nursed up in profaneness and ignorance, and in natural carelessness about their salvation, makes their case very dangerous. 2. Their wicked Hierarchy, or Satanarchy rather, is very dangerous to souls. By this, the priests rule over the consciences of the people, and bishops over the priests, and the Pope over the bishops—and thus he becomes indeed the son of perdition, yea the cause and father of the loss of many souls. 3. Their damnable devices of satisfaction for sins, and indulgences for sins to come, and thus they make merchandise of souls, in a more gross manner than is to be found in any religion in the world. This hath these pernicious consequences: 1. It looseth the reins unto profaneness; 2. And leads men into the natural sin of hypocrisy and feigned shows, of devised and imposed duty, instead of true and real holiness; 3. And leads away from Jesus Christ, and brings them to depend on self-justification. In a word, it is a religion framed by Satan and wicked men, to answer a carnal heart's desires to the full, and is indeed a sorcery, and a most prevailing one, (Rev. xviii. 23). And the judgment is: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence

of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," (Rev. xiv. 9, 10).

3. Consider that where the truth is in some good measure purely delivered as to the matter, there are but a few that are ministers of the New Testament indeed, full of the Holy Ghost, and bearing their Master's image, and going at his call, and feeding in his name. And though conversion doth not necessarily follow on a minister's godliness, and his lawful call, yet commonly there is little success where there is such a carnal ministry, as that place (Jerem. xxiii. 32) holds forth in some degree: "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." This is a blessed appointment of Jesus Christ, and of absolute necessity to the well-being of the church, and of constant continuance therein, (Ephes. iv. 12, 13, 14), and it is highly to be esteemed. But there is no reason that the honour of the office should cover the faults of them that are clothed with it. Faults that cannot be hid, that are plagues in many ministers throughout the churches, are, 1. Undertaking the work, and setting themselves in the way of preparation unto it, without any call from God, or spiritual sanctifying impression which might conclude a call. 2. Studying of human learning for the increase of gifts, rather than studying true conformity to God in holiness, which is a great qualification. Hence is it seen, that the most learned, and men of greatest gifts, have least or no grace; though sometimes it be otherwise, to testify, that learning and grace are

not inconsistent. 3. The much mixture of man in the dispensing of the gospel, (1 Cor. i. 17, and ii. 4), so that preaching, by many is done as a proof of their parts and learning, rather than the pure and lowly mean whereby Christ hath resolved to save believers. 4. The little standing in God's counsel, and acting with a dependence on him, and the influences of the Holy Ghost, which is a cause of much sad work, (Jer. xxiii. 22).

Now, all these faults in ministers have these prejudices attending them as to the people: 1. Some from the evidence of these things have rejected the ministry, and spoken evil of it,—a great sin, though it is sad that they should have such a temptation; and which is more pernicious to them, do join themselves to such in whom greater faults are to be found. 2. The Holy Ghost works not, or rarely, with their ministry, but in justice withdraws, when he is not employed nor depended on more than he may and ought to be by any godly man in any employment of the mind. 3. And even these workings are not missed by people; but as such ministers come in their own name, so the people hear them as such, and never inquire after more than what is man's therein; and instead thereof, have their heads stuffed with notions, and knowledge sometimes increased, and affections tickled by some human devices and flashes of wit,—which things are mighty pleasing to a carnal heart, both to give and take, both by precept and example. 4. And such carnal ministers usually lead the people, both by precept and example, into such a sort of practice of godliness as is found with themselves; for ordinarily, except where the fear of God overawes, or where a man is gross in his walking, no man will

deliver such a frame of practical godliness to others which is cross to his present attainments or resolutions at least. But of this more fully, when we speak of ourselves and our own case.

4. Consider, besides all these things, and though all these were removed, how small a number of them that have the gospel purely preached, and by faithful ministers, do profess any thing; I mean, do not so much as take on an honest-like name of Christians. Few will be found, if you search them out wisely; and that will be by searching after their professed obedience to law and gospel. 1. By the consideration of the law, many sorts of hearers are visibly cast out. To begin with the third commandment, all swearers and forswearers, that commonly and fearlessly take his dreadful name in vain, are out of the way of professors: all sabbath-breakers: all eminently unfaithful in their relationship, and in the duties thereof: bad husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants: all hearts misordered, and persons under the prevalent power of passion, malice, and envy: brawlers, chiders: all unclean beasts, that burn in their filthy lusts, though in the heart only: all thieves, extortioners, and such as get unjust gain: all noted liars, that make no conscience of their words, especially in backbiting and speaking evil of others: all covetous persons. 2. As to the gospel, they are not to be reckoned professors who give any visible token of contempt and despising of its ministry, and turn away their ear from hearing the word: who are openly negligent in performing the duties which are required of them, as family and secret worship in prayer, and reading God's word: whose conversation is nowise influenced thereby as to any

change, but who live just as if they were under heathenism.

5. Consider how many professors who are not guilty of any of these gross evils, yet have a tainted profession. I mean, in such spots as observers may perceive as evidences of their unsoundness. Many such things there are. A temptation suitable to their corruptedness coming, is welcomed by many, as the thirty pieces by Judas: a trying time, when suffering for the profession cometh, and then are they burnt up by this sun.

6. Consider how many untainted professions are unsound before God. When trials are not great, unsound professors may rub them out: when temptations are not strong, common restraining grace may prevent their being carried away who yet may be heart-workers of iniquity, and may be dust in God's balance, though all the world besides cannot see their lightness. This sad truth should not be improved into an uncharitable censoriousness of others, but to a jealousy over ourselves, and a belief of this grave truth, that few enter into life.

And as I brought the caution of the truth home unto ourselves, so shall I also in this, and shew you on what considerations it is evident that there are few comparatively that shall be saved in this land, and who walk in the way to life. And in this I shall use such freedom as, I judge, becomes an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

Consider, 1. How evidently the multitude walk in the way of profaneness, which leads to hell. He is a stranger to England that is ignorant of it. Now, how many thousands of such there are, would be found no easy work to reckon. Such all carry the

brand-mark of the devil. This profaneness prevails generally in some places, and too much every where. London may be a scantling of this.

2. Consider how many souls are poisoned and murdered by their teachers. Not to speak of the Papists, who in England are in a far more hopeless case as to salvation than if they were shut up in cloisters in Spain or Italy; neither need I speak of the gross errors and damnable heresies that many are fed with unto destruction; neither shall I name any party. But in general, whoever are fed with doctrines contrary to those foundations, and drink them in, must certainly perish:—1. To the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. 2. To the incarnation of the Son of God. 3. To the satisfaction paid to justice for sin. 4. To the justification of a sinner by a believing laying hold of this satisfaction. 5. To the authority of the written word, both in revealing truth to be believed, and prescribing duty for practice. But I would speak rather of such teachers as have the greatest multitude committed to their charge, and the main allowance in the time for the discharge of their calling; and I do it not out of reflection on them, nor out of partiality, but from a real compassion on the perishing multitude of this nation, and to stir you up unto the like sense, and to pray for the Lord's pitying them.

And of them, without any breach of charity it may be said, 1. As to their persons; 2. And then, their way of ministry.

1. As to their persons, which is very considerable for misleading the hearers. 1. The generality of them know not God, nor his Son Jesus Christ, in any saving experimental way: they walk not with him,

nor have his image on them. It is a greater matter to know God savingly, and to have real acquaintance with him, than is commonly thought. Their common, carnal, and earthly mindedness, and walking after the flesh, doth sadly prove it.

2d, They run unsent. How few have a real call from Jesus Christ, to dispense his word and gospel. Their way of entering by simony and unlawful means, and into the rooms of faithful believers; their evident caring for the fleece rather than the flock, doth sadly shew it.

3d, They are generally insufficient and unable for the work they pretend to be about. The sufficiency of several is no cover for the lamentable insufficiency of the generality.

4th, They are generally negligent in their calling. Though in these parts, on obvious accounts, there is some more diligence in preaching, yet there is little of this through the land. And as for the Nonconformists their neglect of this, their case varieth, for the generality of their hearers are an uncertain company, that scarcely look on those they hear as their pastors.

2. As to their ministry, we may find, besides what is hinted, these things, which are very dangerous to souls. There are those errors commonly taught,—1. That people are regenerated in baptism. 2. That such as are obedient unto the church are all good Christians, and accordingly are spoken of, in life and after death; which is a marvellous hardening of the wicked. 3. Speaking evil of strictness, and preciseness, and spirituality, when they do so of them that study the same, who are generally neither lovers of them nor beloved by them. Now, who can tell the

pernicious consequences of such doctrines, which, alas! are to be read off the conversation of the generality of their hearers? 4. For worship, fopperies, and mocking of religious worship; and mingling many human devices, and symbols, and badges of conformity with, or inclination to, the Mother of Harlots, especially in their prayers and sacraments. All which shew that it is no wonder that we conclude the generality of England's inhabitants to be in the broad way to hell.

Consider, 3. How many that have escaped these evils, and are some way clothed with a profession of the faith of purer doctrine and practice, of purer worship, are yet sadly unsound at heart. The evidences given in the general may be here particularly applied for confirmation of this truth as applied unto us. I shall add a few more.

1. How many ignorant ones crowd in amongst professors, that are ever learning, and never come unto the knowledge of the truth. 2. How many perishing under secret lusts, as secret leaks in a fair-like vessel, which appear most in a storm. 3. How many carnal compliers with every wind of temptation, with every turn and change—men that count gain godliness, and hardly can be persuaded of the lawfulness of any course that may expose them unto suffering; and resolve still to save their stake, be the game played as it will.

In short, the characters of godliness in the word, agree unto a very small number; so that select and sum up from all, and you may see that the saved, in comparison of them that perish, are very few.

USE.—Lay aside any deceitful principle about the multitude of the saved, and be no more confident

upon the same; but exercise jealousy the more, and search more.

Observ. 5. The difference of the numbers of them that obtain these two states, is because of the difference of the ways that lead thither. All that know of life and destruction, desire the better, and to escape the worse. But their hinderance is, the difference of the ways. The way to destruction is open, broad, and easy; the other way to life is strait, difficult, and narrow. Of the particular properties of the two ways, we shall speak afterward, if the Lord will. Now only of this general: If the way to life were as sweet, and safe, and taking with flesh and blood, it would be filled with travellers: but it is not so, and as we shall hear, cannot be so. Let us then lay this to heart, that it is men's unwillingness to meet with labour and difficulties, that discourages many—it is their being bewitched with the present ease of a sinful path. Admire, then, the folly of mankind who are thus taken with the circumstances of the way when the issue and lodging-place are so far different.

## SERMON II.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—MAT. VII. 13, 14.

ETERNAL concernments are so weighty in themselves and of so near importance to every man, that nothing can be a greater kindness, than to give real help and warning hereabouts. But through men's

unbelief, it is commonly little valued, and little improved.

Having already given you the general truths hinted in the words of my text, we shall now enter upon the particular handling of these words. And they afford to us these things, as the subject of our exercise:

1. That the way to heaven is narrow and strait, and to hell broad.

2. It is the Lord's will, that men should walk in the narrow way.

Of the first of these—that the ways to heaven and hell are greatly different, not only in their issues, but in the paths themselves—in handling of this, we shall shew, 1. Why the one is called Life, the other Destruction: 2. Why the course that leads thither, is called a Way: 3. Shew the different properties of these two ways.

*First*, Of the different ends:—Heaven is called life, not only from the common signifying of all happiness by the term Life, but because it is the thing promised in the first covenant, (Gal. iii. 12), albeit now attainable only by the second and better covenant; and because it is truly life, in comparing it with the present life of nature.

1. Compare it with the life of nature; this union of soul and body in a tolerable harmony. 1. This life, at best, is a moving towards death. Man is on a journey from one grave to another, from one womb to another, in our common mother the earth. Life now is but as a candle: while it is burning, it is wasting. There is no such thing in heaven. There, time is concluded; eternity is the only period (and this concludes all periods) of its duration. 2. This life, even though it wanted this period, hath many mise-

ries in it, that take away its deserving such a name; such as, its sorrows, crosses, (Rev. xxi. 4, 5). 3. One generation thrusts another away. Life is now a flitting moveable: the fathers must give place to their children, and they to theirs. In heaven there is no such thing.

2. Compare it with the life of grace, or that new life that the Lord by regeneration begets in his children. That life is but a life of preparation unto this in heaven, as the child in the womb is to his coming into the world. Its best is but an earnest of what is possessed fully afterwards.

3. It wants not its own twinges, and faintings, and swooning fits; many spiritual diseases there are in the regenerate, besides all their hard work Yet it is more deservedly called life, if compared with the other.

The state of men in hell is called Destruction, the most terrible name of any evil:—not a destruction of their being, nor of their sense of a miserable being; these are preserved: nor of any evil thing in them; all of this sort remains. But it is called thus, 1. Because there is a perfect and full removing of every thing that is really comfortable unto them; it reaches both soul and body. 2. Every evil thing is present—evil company, an evil place, an evil and miserable condition; universal torments in soul and body of an eternal endurance, without ease.

Ere we proceed, we shall apply this into your consciences.

Believe both firmly. Do you believe the sad state, as well as the joyful one? It is men's self-love that makes them more ready to believe the great

things of good than evil, as deserved in spiritual matters; when yet, in other things, it is more ordinary to do the contrary. This great truth of the greatness of heaven's happiness is best believed, when these things have their due weight with the soul: 1. The faithfulness of the promises. 2. The spring and end of it—that free grace may be glorified. 3. The worth of Christ's purchase, and the price paid for it. 4. The aspiring nature of the new life, like an infant framed to live in a more open place. 5. The greatness of the tastes and earnests of it got in this life.

As to hell in its greatness of misery—when, 1. The faithfulness of the threatening and threatener; 2. The design of the threatener—the glory of his justice; 3. The deserving of sin, which the knowledge of the greatness of the party offended, and holiness of his law broken, do mightily shew; 4. The first fruits of this, in horror of confusion, and rage against God, and his law, and holiness, in some of the wicked—when these things are duly pondered, then may men attain the faith of this. Believe them—for as they are the main principles of your religion, so are they of most effectual influence upon men's hearts and lives, when the faith of them is once well digested. The true belief of these plain propositions commonly professed will produce a deep impression, a high esteem, and due exercise about those things; which may serve as marks of your faith.

1. Time, precious time, and especially, time under the gospel:—that is the only thing between us and our eternal lot; precious for its use of preparation for it, and for divine long-suffering acted on, and in

time. It should be redeemed by many, well improved by others; and it may be holily wearied of by others, whose hope is lively.

2. God's favour in Christ:—how should this be esteemed, prayed for, and praised for, and thankfully kept; this is our right to happiness.

3. Holiness and sin:—how should men's affections change in reference to these, which are the ways to those great and different states.

4. This life and all its concernments:—this faith would make us go up and down, as unconcerned how this world goeth; like a man carried in a vessel over the seas, travelling to take up an abode for all his days, is not concerned in learning the art of sailing, which others that intend to live on and by it will do.

I leave it with these few notes: 1. It is the greatest difficulty in religion, to believe firmly these things. 2. The greatest advantage to a believer in his walk and exercise, is from the belief of them. 3. The greatest and most common cheat in religion, is about the pretended and alleged faith of them.

The *second* thing to be handled is, the term of "the way," and "the gate," applied unto that course and exercise which the Lord hath appointed for going to heaven, and for those which men walk in to hell.

This way of expressing, not to urge it too strictly, holds out to us, 1. That these different practices of godliness or ungodliness (for so shall we call them, until we determine them more particularly), have these different states as their end: they lead to them, as a way doth unto some place, from which it gets its name of such a way. So, ungodliness is the way to

destruction, 1. By threatening from God. 2. Desert in itself. 3. And it is a sort of earnest of it: There are begun degrees of destruction in the ungodly. Godliness is the way to life, 1. By promise; 2. Fitness and meetness for it, (Col. i. 12). 3. It is also an earnest of glory.

2. That there is labour and travel requisite in walking in them. Whenever you hear of a way, you hear of what implies travel. It is true, there is great difference in ways, and in the manner of travelling, as it is here; but even the wicked want not their pains in the way.

3. Travel in it must be progressive. He that walks in a way, and goes not forward, doth nothing. In the way to heaven, some are farther advanced than others, and at some times more than others. And so it is with them that walk in the broad way: sometimes they may be not far from the kingdom of God, and sometimes at hell's mouth.

4. From the term "gate," we learn that there is an orderly and methodical entering on, or finishing of that way: but because we would not press parabolic phrases too strictly, we pass it. And having formerly spoken of this also, we forbear the application of it.

The *third* thing to be handled is, the properties of these two ways; the one called strait, and the gate narrow; and the other the reverse. I shall handle these things distinctly, ere I add any application.

I. That the gate to life, and the way to it, is strait and narrow. In handling of this, I would, first, Give you some things that confirm that so it is; secondly, Shew wherein the straitness of it lieth.

First, That the way to life is hard and strait, 1. It is

seen in the confessions and practices of multitudes that walk in the broad way: some never think on it; some are affrighted from it, when thinking thereupon. Upon this same account it is seen, that the way to life is narrow, 2. In that the truly godly find it very hard, and the longer, both the sweeter and the harder. They at first seem to attain something of sweetness in religion; but afterwards, the work and the trials are better seen. 3. In the hypocrite's pain, which he finds in the external show of this strait way (Mal. iii. 14), though it be certain, that the hypocrite is not acquainted either with the sweetest, or hardest part of religion. But besides the testimony of the word, the surest confirmation of this, and the clearest, will be by giving a particular account of the straitness of this gate, and narrowness of this way to life.

As the second thing wherein this stands, I shall give you a brief account of the way to life, and of the difficulty in each of them. And they all are but so many stages in this way, and passages that a believer must go through.

1. The new birth, (John iii. 3, 6). A man is never in the way to heaven till this change pass over him. This is a change, 1. Of nature. Oh! how hard is it for folks to put off their nature! They think they make excuse for any fault, when it is said to flow from their nature. This is a creation, (2 Cor. v. 17). 2. It is a most perfect change of inclination and affections, that what was loved is hated now, and what hated is loved now: and people know what a pain there is in turning the inclination. 3. It is a change wrought by another power than theirs, which renders it some way the harder, though the more sure and

possible. Now, compare this new birth with the natural birth, or with death, which is as the soul's birth into glory; and the differences are very evident. Alas! how many are there that stand at this gate, and by no means will pass it. What!—change their natures and cast off all their beloveds?—they cannot hear of it.

2. The strait gate of the covenant. Shall I call it strait, that is cast up so wide with a universal invitation? Yet I may venture to call it so. It is so strait, that no man with any of such baggage can enter it, or will be willing. 1. The proud unhumbled sinner cannot enter in here. He that comes not empty and lost in his own sight, cannot be admitted to make such a bargain with God for salvation. 2. The resolved idolater that will not sell all for Christ in this bargain, and will not give up with all other lovers, to make a new covenant with Christ, cannot enter. (Matt. xiii. 44.)

3. There is the new life, which is a part of this narrow way. This follows on the new birth, and is the soul's promise in the covenant, that he will lead a new life, (Rom. vi. 4). This new life is a great and rare thing. We shall not insist at large on it, but on a few properties of it.

1. It is a life of faith, (Gal. ii. 20, Heb. x. 38). Formerly, the man lived by sense and reason: now, he doth by faith, looking on a promise as a good security; and employing God, and acting faith on it, whenever he is in any strait.

2. It is a life of sincerity and uprightness, or a sincere life. Hypocrisy and deceitful shows he striveth against, and in a great measure overcometh; for there is now uprightness in the inward parts, and no

corner of the heart that is reserved for any evil to lodge in, though it may be found there in too great abundance, (2 Cor. ii. 17).

3. It is a life of holiness. The Holy Ghost is its author, the holy law of God the rule, and the holy Jesus the man's pattern and example.

4. A growing life, and that all a man's days. This new life being duly cared for, attains growth as long as a man lives.

This life is called "new," because the man lived not this way before: and the rest of the world do not so, nor ever did, nor will do. It is different from the life of the world, in that it hath another food for its strengthening, and air for its breathing; another father, or another and more special way of begetting, another end it lives for and aims at, with other vital actings.

The third thing that shews the narrowness of the way to heaven, is the cross. This is laid in the way, and every man must resolve to take it up when he wins to it, and follow Christ. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," (Mark viii. 34). It is true, that every man meets with his crosses less or more; but Christ deals very plainly with his people, in telling them, 1. That their happiness is not to be expected in this life, but in the seed and seal of it: he draws them to heaven by faith, to know what his love hath prepared for them, (1 Cor. xv. 19; Matt. xix. 28, 29). That they must lay their account in resolution with the greatest suffering, even of the loss of life, rather than to deny the least of his truth and words, (Matt. x. 38; Mark viii. 38). 3. And that

all their life long, and every day, they may meet with such things.

The fourth thing that shews the narrowness of the way to heaven, is the work that is to be done by them that walk therein. As,

1. The work of mortification, (Mark ix. 43, 45; Col. iii. 5,) and that especially to be extended unto the most beloved lust. How painful this is, many may know; nay, many venture on hell, rather than thus to part with them. It stands also in some acts of faith, as, 1. That such a lust is forbidden of God, under pain of his displeasure. 2. In a striving resolution to gratify it in nothing. 3. In calling for help, both to mind and practice this resolution in our walk.

2. The work of self-denial. Whatever the lust be, as self-interest is very large, it must be denied, and the interest of God's glory and service must sway the soul in all things, (Mark viii. 34).

3. Tender and considerate watching.

4. The work of running on in this way, and making daily progress, (1 Cor. ix. 24; Phil. iii. 10, 11).

5. The work of fighting and wrestling with spiritual enemies, (Eph. vi. 10, 11); to watch, and learn skill to put on, and handle wisely our spiritual armour with which the Lord has furnished us.

The fifth and last thing which shews the straitness of the way to heaven, is the new trials that a Christian meets with, and none but he, and these from the Lord himself, for wise ends; of which hereafter,—as, 1. The swoonings and faintings of the soul through the Lord's withdrawing. (See Psalm xxiii. 3.) 2. The labour of wrestling with him, when his face is hid—a hard but ordinary trial.

I may yet add further, the gate of death is a strait and narrow gate, by which believers enter into life:—that after the trial of all these last, this remains, as the greatest difficulty; not to speak of it in a natural sense, but only as it is a trial, wherein a miscarrying is irretrievable: die amiss, and all is gone:—and also, as the soul is often in the least fitness for any work then. But the encouragements of faith in this are great and strong: Christ the conqueror is with his own in these trials.

II. That the way to destruction is broad and easy, is seen,

1. In that men are born with their faces and hearts towards this way; their inclinations lead them strongly to it:—there is no need of any change on them to fit them for it.

2. They have multitudes of temptations suited to their sinful inclinations that, as a wind, drive them on in it. Many lusts are gratified by walking in this path, and many wise and noble after the flesh are treading in it.

3. The Lord is often provoked, and may soon be, to take off any restraints that stand in their way. (Psalm v. 10, 11).

4. They ordinarily shift off easily all crosses for Christ's sake, by complying with their carnal inclinations.

5. They walk at liberty from any inward spiritual bonds on their hearts and way. So it is called "a walking after the imagination of their own hearts," (Deut. xxix. 19); opposed expressly to a walking after the rule of the word.

CAUTION.—Notwithstanding of all these things,

yet there are circumstances of another nature, that shew their ways to be yet contrary to those: As,

1. The way to life, on all these accounts, is easy, 1. Because of the kindly delight that the new nature hath in all its difficulties and labour. 2. The lively hope of the glorious end of the way, (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18). 3. The gracious support and help of infinite strength. 4. The communications of joy and delight they feel in their works;—a part of the encouragements allowed them in this life.

As also, the way to destruction is strait, 1. In that all the walkers therein are in bonds and fetters to Satan, and their own lusts, (John viii. 34). 2. In that God often meets them with his warnings, and makes conscience fly in their faces, as the angel in Balaam's. 3. They want not their own graceless cursed crosses, and ofttimes in as great a measure, as the truly godly do. 4. The fear of the issue is enough to embitter all for the present.

USE.—Is the way to heaven narrow and strait?—Then, how shameless is the graceless world, to reproach the way of the godly as strict! It is the most shameless slander that ever the world made. To call the godly ungodly is but a lie against them; to reproach the sincere as hypocrites, or the peaceable as seditious,—this is all little in regard of this,—to reproach them for that which is their glory, and that even in scripture words; to reproach them as puritans and precisians. Of the same nature is their commendation of men, as being men of latitude, and of a large walk in the matters of God. That we may insist a little more on this inference that is so clear and pertinent, let us sift out the causes of this reproach.

1. Carnal men naturally think all too little for this

world, and any thing almost too much for the world to come.

2. They generally conceive good hopes of themselves, when walking according to this graceless principle.

3. As they like not doctrines that cross these precepts and practices of theirs, so, far worse, practices different from, and contrary to theirs; for practice is a more living and abiding testimony than doctrine. Hence we see, that let professors profess what they will, if they agree in practice with the world, they are liked by it well enough. For instance—in a place given to scandalous misspending of time in tippling, if a professor invited to share with them, should simply say, he cannot in conscience come so near an appearance of evil; this would vex the graceless company more, than if another should join with them, and even in their company speak of the strictness of the way to heaven.

4. False doctrine, or false application of true doctrine by ministers, hardens sinners mightily in their prejudice against strictness in God's ways: as also, the godly their placing too much of religion in little and small things, especially if of an indifferent nature in themselves.

2. Then it is a good token of a right way, that it is narrow and strait; and a shrewd suspicion of a false one, that it is broad—I mean, if it be represented as a way that leads to heaven: for the way of gathering churches of professors is quite different from this, and it is a woful mistake in people to confound them. There are three false ways that are broad: 1. The way of intellect and morality—the Pharisee's way. (See Matt. vi. 19, 20.) 2. The way of external

conformity to the letter of the law—an outward service. 3. The way of any church order under heaven, is but a broad way to heaven, let men make it never so strait; for as long as men only are judges of our way, there is a great latitude for hypocrisy, and much double dealing with God, if men's hearts be not sound.

USE 3.—Then, make a wise choice;—it is laid before you, as even life and death, and their several ways. It is sad, that men should be at a stand what to choose; but much more, that they should make a bad choice, even to choose death.

I conclude with these few remarks: 1. The way and the end are inseparable; therefore take both, or leave both. If you would have life, walk in the narrow way to it: if you will walk in the broad way, resolve to meet with destruction.

2. The narrow way grows the longer the broader and easier, and the broad way the longer the narrower, till a man be in hell. It is joy to a godly man, that so much of his way is past: it is sore to the other, that it is so with him, and that there is so little remaining.

3. Unless time be preferred to eternity, there is no comparison between the two. A time of trouble at worst—an eternity of ease, and joy, and life: a time of delight at best, and an eternity of destruction thereafter;—is there any choice here with a reasonable man?

## SERMON III.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—MATT. VII. 13, 14.

WE shall yet again enter on a further account of the hardness of the way to heaven, and of the broadness of the way to hell, both by further enlarging on what was glanced at, and from new particulars: but the latter we shall bring in in the application.

Besides what is said we shall now,

1. Speak somewhat by way of caution, to prevent mistakes.

2. Some native doctrinal inferences from the whole purpose.

3. Some lamentation and exhortation.

I. For caution, take these things,—1. For all these things that shew the way to life to be narrow, yet unto the godly man it is a most pleasant way. Oh! with what delight doth he walk therein, with the heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord, as Jehoshaphat, (2 Chron. xvii. 6, Psalm i. 2, and cxix. 32, 59). It is a way of great breadth, though not for sin, yet for duty and delight, (Psalm cxix. 96). He makes haste and progress in it, (Psalm cxix. 60, Philip. iii. 13, 14). And on the contrary, the way of sin, and unto death, is dark and strait, and that because of the nature of the new exertion in the soul, (Rom. vii. 21, 22, 23). This makes many things sweet and easy that other-

wise are hard. How much toil will a mother undergo about her own child? Why, all is natural to her. The strivings, and wrestlings, and fightings, are hard indeed unto the flesh; but the new man likes them the better. See if it be not so with you in your toil in religion. Though there be something within that tires somewhat of work, there is somewhat within also that makes tiresome work sweet. The way of life is a pleasant way, because of the lively faith and hope of the prize, (Rom. viii. 18, 24, 25; 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18; Heb. x. 34). It is pleasant from the support and help of infinite strength, (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, 10; Isa. xl. 31). It is pleasant from the sweet enjoyments of fellowship with God they feel in the mean time. The simple and plain meaning of this truth is then in these: 1. That the way to heaven is full of great difficulties. 2. They are such as an unregenerate man cannot away with. 3. And such as a godly man, without courage and strength from heaven, would never wrestle through; but with that strength, sometimes finds them easy:—and again, it is for his advantage to find them hard and strait.

Second caution--Whatever breadth and wideness there is in the way to destruction, it is ofttimes on other accounts found strait. They find it bitter, and tire of it, (Hab. ii. 13). All the walkers therein, are bondslaves to sin and Satan, (John viii. 34, 44). God often meets them with warnings by his word and rod, as the angel did Balaam, and thereby conscience straitens them. Ahab, in the way to hell, met Elijah as an enemy, (1 Kings xxi. 20). Their fear of the issue embitters all for the present; and the vanity and emptiness of all their idols to stay their hearts with solid satisfaction. The meaning of this then is

—to corrupt nature the way to hell is easy, and that it is commonly felt so by the wicked.

II. Draw some doctrinal inferences from the whole purpose.

1. We see, then, that the Lord hath constituted a great difference betwixt the ways that lead men to their estates in another world, as to the gratifying of the flesh: the one strait to it, the other easy. We have said enough to confirm this; the words are also clear for it. The reasons of this are, 1. Conformity to Christ the head, in the godly, who entered into glory by a strait way, as has been said. 2. It cannot otherwise be, supposing the Lord's design on his people to glorify himself, in the bearing them up, and in the exercise of grace. 3. Corruption being left in both—in the one wholly, in the other in part—makes it to be so as it is. 4. That the Lord may leave it to men's choice though he graciously determine his own, by his hand, to choose life, whatever hardness be in the way.

2. No man's testimony concerning the two ways can be of such service as a godly man's who hath walked in both—as none know so well without experience what hell and heaven are, as the devils that have tasted of both; and we see their malice bewrayeth it:—unless we except our Lord Jesus, who had a sort of experimental knowledge of both, as his readiness to save sheweth. And the witness of the godly is seen, 1. In that they all have turned out of that way, and never turn in again. 2. And they testify a vast difference between them, not only as to the issue, but the way itself. And what means all their shame, and sorrow, and mourning for their walking

in the broad way, but a testimony against the one, and for the other?

3. We see the true reason of the difference in the number of the saved and damned, is from the interest of the flesh, denied by a few, and indulged by the greater part: and we may wonder at the folly of men making so bad a choice of their way to eternity, as commonly they do.

III. Lamentation and reproof.

1. Over the godly who are questioning their way, because of the difficulty they find therein, whereas it ought rather to confirm them that they are in the right; or who at any time look with envy on the ease of the foolish, (Psalm lxxiii).

2. Over the ungodly, who bless themselves that they never found any such hardship and straitening in godliness. It is strange but true, that the ungodly find these the most easy, that the godly find most hard; as faith not only of divine truth, but of their interest in Christ—or that repentance is an easy thing with them—or the sincerity of their hearts: they think their hearts were always right:—or about prayer, and all religious duties. And this is because they know not the true nature of all these great things.

3. Over those who frame to themselves a religion free of all its difficulties. Men in professing to take the rule of the word for the rule of their religion, do often wrench and cut away all things that are hard therein in applying it.

Lay aside that foolish and common opinion, that the way to heaven is easy. Oh, by all means beat it out of your minds! I shall in pressing this exhortation shew, 1. The commonness of the mistake. 2.

What are the causes of it. 3. What is its danger. 4. How it may be removed.

1. To shew the commonness of this opinion about the easiness of the way to heaven, it may serve to see men's confident hopes of getting safe thither, with their laziness in striving, or taking pains. This is unquestionable, that many of the most confident are most lazy. It is a common thing to see men of these sorts to be confident of heaven, 1. That never mortified one corruption, especially their darling one, nor ever endeavoured it. 2. Nor ever wrestled with God in prayer, as a hard work. 3. Nor ever watched over their hearts. 4. Nor ever deny themselves. 5. Nor ever sanctify a day to the Lord in a spiritual manner. 6. Nor ever submit to a cross, that a little warping can prevent or shift.

2. What are the causes of it. 1st, Men s own hearts are inclined to such a way, and so are easily prevailed with to think it is so. This inclination is strengthened by these: 1. A rooted ignorance of God in his greatness, holiness, and truth,—the root of all wickedness. 2. Ignorance of the nature of heaven and eternal life: he that knows the end and prize lost, is likliest to know what running and fighting are called for. 3. Ignorance of their enemies, their own hearts, and others: he that knows not his heart's corruption is not likely to take much pains to have it made better. 4. Undervaluing of eternal things, especially when compared with temporal.

2d, Satan is busy in persuading to this, being cunning enough and well acquainted with his own interests. If he could, he would keep all ignorant; and if that cannot be, he strives to make them lazy, and lose their crown.

3d, Mistakes of the practice of the godly. The ungodly see not the secret duties of the godly, nor their inward work in public duties, and therefore think them like themselves.

4th, The ensnaring practice and principles of a careless world about them. If they be like their neighbours and others, they think well of themselves.

3. What is its danger. Its danger is great. This keeps them in the broad way, and great with peace of mind, and against all warnings and convictions. Hence is it sadly seen in experience that multitudes of professors keep it, and are most rarely awakened of any body else.

4. How it is to be removed. 1. By the rule of the word. 2. The practice of the saints, as David and Paul (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27). 3. By an honest experiment. The last consideration is that of the text, which we shall now enter on.

It is Christ's special will, and our special duty, to enter in, and keep on in the strait way that leads unto life. This is the scope of the words. If any scruple or doubt should remain about this, these things clear it: 1. It was Christ's special errand as a priest, to remove the otherwise immoveable impediments lying in this way. 2. As a prophet, to teach the church the way. 3. As a king, to lead them in it, and help them on against all impediments that remain. 4. In his state of humiliation, he went before us in this way as a pattern. 5. In that of exaltation, he assureth us of the happy issue of striving; and in the room of his people, and as their head, hath taken possession of the kingdom. 6. The great principle that moved him, and the end he aimed at, was to have his Father's love, and wisdom, and grace,

and his own, glorified in bringing sinners to heaven. As God, he accomplished the work by merit and strength; as man, by suffering and example. So that it is abundantly clear that Christ envies not your walking in the way to life, but rather invites, commands, encourages, threatens, to stir you up to walk therein.

That it is our special and main duty is also clear, not only on the former grounds, but, 1. Because this alone tends to the saving of the soul. 2. No duty whereby God can be actively glorified by us can be performed save in this way. But there is no difficulty in this point, or necessity of clearing it. If it be the way, and the only way to heaven, then every one will judge it necessary to walk in it.

Our work, then, mainly in opening up this exhortation, and preparing for its practice, stands, 1. In clearing what it is to enter in at the strait gate. 2. In clearing the motives and arguments whereby Christ presseth it; and then we shall also press it.

1. What is it to enter in at the strait gate? It is,

1st, To begin, and set forth well and rightly, in the practice of godliness. A good beginning is the one-half of the work.

2d, It is to hold on and continue therein. Though the word "enter," at the first view, and in the parabolic phrase, seems not to imply this, yet necessarily it is implied, in that heaven itself is the end; and all the course that leads thither is spoken of as a gate and a way. Though our Lord's way of speaking may shew that the main difficulty is in right beginning, and that they that begin, and enter in, never go out of it again.

2. What are his arguments to press it? They are,

the wideness of the way to destruction, and the multitude of walkers therein,—which say to us these things:

1. That the greatness and commonness of danger should be a sharp spur to duty. The Lord allows a lawful exercise of self-love; and oh that it were more in exercise amongst you! The report of destruction should make salvation more lovely, and all the means that lead unto it, even those that are hardest.

2. The multitude of walkers in a way, of itself is no sound argument for its goodness, nor that it shall have a good end. Christ would not have his people to follow the multitude: they are to be a singular people as to their way of walking.

The second argument is from the nature of the way that leads unto life, which saith,—

1. Our Lord is very free and faithful in warning his people of all inconveniences they may meet with in the way; which being duly pondered, may prevent many stumblings.

2. The difficulty of the way to heaven makes many hold on in the way to hell. The wicked know the straitness of the way to heaven. I named this amongst the general truths. But now, how come they to know the way to be strait, since they never walked in it? They know it by what they hear in the word; by what they see in the saints; by what they feel in the form of religion; by what their lusts teach them to fear there is in godliness;—and this, compared with what they feel in the broad way, varies the case from what hath been already spoken of them.

Now, to press this exhortation on you in the close of all this purpose, I would desire you to gather and

compose your spirits, and reflect on what hath been said, and proved, and cleared, 1. That there are two different states after this life abiding all men: there must you shortly be. 2. There are two different ways that lead thither. 3. It fares with men according to the way they take. 4. There is a wide difference between the numbers of the walkers in the two ways. 5. And that, from the great difference in the ways. We have also taken a closer view of the words, and shewn you, and proved, that the way to heaven is narrow, and to hell broad, by several illustrations, though many more might be adduced, and they that are named never insisted on. And lastly, that our Lord is willing you should walk in the way to life, and escape destruction; and hath bound it on you by his command, as your duty; and hath sent me to proclaim this his will, and to declare to you your duty.

My question then is, Do you believe these things or not? If you do not, propose your scruples: how easy a work it is to clear them! And what use do you intend to make of them? Say not, you expect to hear that of me, for if you believed these divine truths, you would use them quickly. But I will tell you what use you *do* make of them, ere I tell you what you *ought* to make. "I make use of all," may one say, "for further informing of my understanding about these things;" and thus people learn still to know more and more, and mind to practise nothing. Some will make use of these things for rendering them more censorious and suspicious of others. It is far easier to instruct one how to see a mote in another's eye, than a beam in his own; and he is far more inclined to the one than the other.

The use you *should* make of all this, is to look upon your own way, and see wherein you find it strait and narrow. Oh, for the Lord's sake, try yourselves in this! It is not past hope, even though all be amiss. Do you walk in a way so broad as to give room to any allowed sin, or willingly neglected duty? Then you are not in Christ's strait way. Or is it so strait that you perceive you can make no progress therein with such a load? Then is it good. How came you into that way? Was it by Jesus Christ? And is it in him that you yet walk? Or are you dreaming that there is no farther use of Christ in helping you to heaven, but in dying for you? Oh, sad mistake! Must he not dwell in you by his Spirit,—lead, and guide, and protect you? Is your way so broad, that you can escape your enemies? Or so narrow, that you must go *through* them? Have you the multitude walking with you, or are you much alone? The way of whole parishes travelling to heaven is not the king's highway. A believer, though he have company, yet in a manner he is alone: he hath as much work as if there were none but himself.

After reflecting on and examining of your way, if you find you are in the strait way that leads to life, then, I exhort you, be cheerful: go on in the strength of the Lord. Your way hath a good end, and you shall shortly feel it: your helper is strong. Be painful and diligent; strive on, wrestle, press through all! Weary not of well-doing; mind your work heartily; your reward is sure. Bring forth your faith and patience, and use them nobly, for great shall be your victory in the latter end of the day.

As for you whose consciences may convince you that as yet you have not walked in this way, and

know within yourselves that you have a pretty easy work in godliness, know of a truth and certainty that this way will bring you to destruction, for God threatens it! How terrible is it, for God inflicts it and lays it on! Meditate a while on this. Will the Most High alter his word that hath gone out of his mouth in righteousness, for ease to your sinful flesh? Where hath he said that the lazy shall be crowned, or that a fighter against God, and a friend of sin and Satan, shall be rewarded with eternal life? Then, leave it betimes—even now: make a good choice. The ways and the ends are set before you. Consider how frail and uncertain your life is; how uncertain the gospel's continuance with you is, and any power attending it; how the way will be to you the straiter, the longer that you delay entering in thereat. And if you have a mind to be saved, hearken to these admonitions. Put away your foolish opinions about those ways, and fill your understanding with the certain truth of God in this matter. Lay aside your lazy practices, and take pains about your souls. Enter in at the strait gate, and walk on in the narrow way that leads unto life. And let these be your practices: Enter in Jesus Christ, and have him dwelling in your hearts by faith, and abide in him, and walk in him. Lay aside every sin, especially your besetting sin. Take up every duty, and every thing that is in duty,—the inward spiritual part thereof. And thus you will find the way sweeter than you think for, and an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the kingdom of God.

# SERMON

ON

## EPHESIANS III. 8.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—EPHES. III. 8.

IN these words, the blessed apostle repeateth the same thing he spoke in the preceding verse, of his call, and being constituted a minister of the mysteries of the gospel, and that of free grace; with the addition of a very humble designation he giveth to himself,—"less than the least of all saints;" and a very high and deep expression of the great subject of his preaching,—the unsearchable riches of Christ. This last word of the text only we intend to insist on, as being most pertinent for us. And before we come to observe any thing, we would first a little clear the words. And,

1. By "riches of Christ," ye are not to understand that riches which consists in outward and worldly valuable things, though indeed Christ be the most sovereign owner of all the gold of the earth; but we are mainly to understand that treasure and storehouse which is in Him, of all divine perfections of grace and glory, of which more another time. It is a phrase that denotes the plenty of the riches, their

excellency, and their suitableness to answer all necessities.

2. They are said to be "unsearchable,"—not that it is unlawful to search into them, in as far as they are revealed; or that by such searching, by the Lord's grace and Spirit, a man may not attain unto some sight and knowledge of them. Nay, this apostle doth in this chapter, verse 4, and in 2d Corinthians xi. 6, avow his knowledge in the mystery of Christ; but only, that they are so many and great that no finite understanding can search them out unto perfection; as it is said of God, (Job. xi. 7, 8). And here, by the way, we have an argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ. If there be *unsearchable* riches of Christ, he must be something more than a creature.

The riches of Christ are unsearchable; or his excellency, and the treasures of it in Jesus Christ, are unsearchable. For the opening and clearing of this precious truth, and making way for the manifold usefulness of it, we would take notice of these two things: 1. What the riches and excellencies of Christ are. 2. How they are unsearchable: what sort of searching into them is commanded, and what forbidden.

As to the first,—the riches and excellencies of Christ. This is one of the vastest subjects of all the truths of God, or rather, it containeth the whole truths of the gospel; yea, all that is revealed in the word, of God and man, may be reduced to this. It is the main subject of the gospel; the main of preaching is here; the main of a Christian's meditation in this life is here. Yea, it is very likely that the main exercise of the glorified above is about this. It is,

then, doubtless, an excellent theme to discourse upon, and there is much need of holy hearts and affections in speaking and hearing of it.

We are, then, no further to speak or think of it than is revealed; and indeed there is more revealed than saint or angel can duly speak or think of. And yet all that is revealed, is far from declaring plentifully the matter as it is.

Consider, then, in the first place, the excellency and riches of His person. God the Son, equal in all divine perfections with the Father, (Heb. i. 3); the brightness of his glory, and the express character or image of his person. To discourse upon his excellency on this account, were to undertake to speak of all the glorious perfections and attributes of God which are revealed in the word, which is a vast subject and dreadful. But because he is man also, we are to consider that nature in him. That holy sinless flesh which he took upon him wants not its own excellencies. But especially the *soul* of Jesus Christ, that singular and rare creature, (for it was made, and doubtless with as transcendent excellencies as a creature was capable of). Oh, what treasures of holiness and purity, of grace and glory, were there, and are there in it! And his riches on this account is evidently useful, since it was requisite that the Mediator should be God-man.

But to come a little lower, in the second place consider, that from this personal union of his human nature with his divine person, and his undertaking of the work of redemption in that manner, there was a pouring out of the Spirit without measure upon him, so that he became the fountain of all fulness of grace and glory. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him

from all eternity, personally, in some sense, and that is in his person; but now, upon this undertaking, it dwelt in him bodily, (Col. ii. ix, and i. 19). This pleased the Father, that in him shall all fulness dwell. A Mediator so qualified we stood in need of, as will be seen in the particulars of the management of this text.

Thirdly, Consider his riches and excellency in the discharge of the office of Mediator, being thus so sufficiently qualified for it. And this taketh in all that he did and suffered; all he did before he came in the fulness of time, and all that he now doth, and shall do to the last day. But only to touch a few particulars, consider,

1. The freedom of his mercy in taking upon him this office of Mediator. Nothing constrained him: he was absolutely free. If his own love in a manner constrained him, the more lovely and excellent is he. What happiness wanted he? What can be added to him? If all men had perished, he had lost nothing. But indeed, when he hath taken on him the work of saving his own, none of them can perish. Had he such a desire to have a company of sinful men and women to be with him for ever? Who can sufficiently admire it? Our misery calls for this riches of grace and mercy.

2. Consider his excellency of love, not only in taking it on, but when such and such things were called for by the justice of God, from the Surety. This is more wonderful. If the redemption of all the elect had cost him but one petition or word to justice, it had been matchless love to have bestowed it. But when it was required that he should be a man, and such a man,—and lead such a life, and die such a

death,—to be accused by the law, deserted of his Father and of all creatures, and to have Satan and the world let loose upon him,—oh, what love is here, and how great riches and excellency!

3. And as he refused not to undertake the employment, because of foreseen dangers and difficulties, so when he undertook it he did not faint nor was discouraged because of them. He was born of a mean woman; he was persecuted from his cradle to his grave. All temptations, all trials from God, and men, and devils, were in his cup. And after several years' living thus a man of sorrows (it was his name, sorrowful), and acquainted with the saddest griefs (these were his most constant companions), near his death, the entire cup of wrath, and the dregs of it, for the numberless sins of all the elect, was presented unto him; and after some holy submissive strugglings of sinless human nature at the receiving of such a deluge of wrath, it was drunk up, and the full price paid upon the cross for these souls for whom from all eternity he had bargained with the Father. What riches and excellency of love are there in this! (Rev. i. 5, 6.) He not only drank up the wrath which our sins deserved (which was indeed the cause of his death), but because there was a remaining spottedness in our souls, he took his own blood, and washed us in it. He not only drank that which was as poison to kill him, even the wrath due to our sins, but he took his heart's blood to wash away the stains that those sins had made in our souls. Our sinfulness and pollution call for his richness of mercy.

4. As his love and courage were admirable in going through these things, so his humility, meekness, and compassion come next to be considered. He was

not only by line of the blood-royal, as the son of David according to the flesh, but especially, as God-man, he was the heir of all things. Yet his first cradle is a manger, and his entertainment in the world very coarse. When he came out to his public ministry, how poor and contemptible was his outward appearance to the world! He declares himself that he was below the very foxes and birds, as to the constancy and settledness of his shelter. He came to save the world, and yet every man almost was against him, except a few despised ones. But he was not discouraged, though grieved with their ingratitude. He ate with sinners, and he laid his holy hand upon the leper's skin. He did not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Our stubbornness and rebellious carriage called forth this condescension.

5. His riches of wisdom do eminently appear in the matter of redemption. The manifold wisdom of God doth appear here. It is one of the most glorious and deep contrivances; it is the chief of the ways of God we may well say. Justice is fully satisfied, mercy notwithstanding eminently shines. Sinners are saved, and pardoned freely. The wisdom of it stands in his choosing so fit means for attaining the end; the only fit ones; and in ordering these means wisely, for reaching that end. His end is to reconcile God and man, and to bring man into the favour and friendship of God. God's justice stands in the way of bestowing favour upon man; man's sinfulness separates betwixt God and him. Justice must be satisfied; and both man's guilt and debt, and the power of sin must be removed, ere the Lord accept of him. Blessed Jesus hath first justice to

satisfy, which he doth, by laying down his own blood; a most sufficient price. This, as a price, reconciles God to us, and in its efficacy washes the souls of his people; and when applied by faith, renews them, and works in them love to God. And more particularly his wisdom appears, in applying himself unto us, and taking on him these offices and employments, in the discharge whereof, he fully maketh up all we stand in need of. Because we are enemies to God in our hearts, he subdues us as a king, and bringeth us into subjection, and removeth our natural rebellion. Because we are guilty of sin, he maketh atonement for us to justice, by the sacrifice of himself; and that this sacrifice may have still its efficacy in our renewed transgressions, he still maketh intercession for us. Because we are ignorant of God and his will, he revealeth these things unto us by his word and Spirit, that we may savingly know these things which belong to our peace and salvation. We have many enemies in our way to heaven: he subdueth these, taketh away their deadly sting, and defendeth from any mortal harm from their assaults. He giveth laws unto us as a king, how to carry ourselves in our duty; he giveth as a prophet, discerning, to know and understand them; enableth us to give obedience; and when that fails, he obtaineth pardon for failings. What a manifold wisdom doth appear in all this, and what riches of wisdom!

6. The riches of his righteousness do appear in the matter of redemption. "I counsel thee," he says, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that

thou mayest see," (Rev. iii. 18). This righteousness is what Christ hath not only as a holy man or God, but that which he attained in our name by his perfect obedience and satisfaction, which is imputed unto us.

7. Consider the riches of his power and might. He is the arm of the Lord,—he on whom our help and strength are laid. 1. His overcoming and removing, as it were, justice out of the way of his people's happiness, proves this. 2. His subduing all of them, for all were once rebels and enemies to himself. 3. In preserving his own interest in the hearts of his people, and in his church, against so much opposition from so many enemies; which speaketh much riches of strength and power. 4. In making his enemies tremble before him, by his presence in his church and ordinances; making them to fear, as before an army with banners.

8. Consider the riches of his glory and majesty shining in all this great work. Not only as God, equal with the Father, is his glory infinite; but even in the discharge of his mediatory work, his glory was and is conspicuous. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," (John i. 14), and "He manifested forth his glory," (John ii. 11). All his miracles were glorious things, though blinded sinners could not behold him. His suffering was a most glorious business as ever was accomplished, albeit the outside of it, and what was discernible by carnal eyes, seemed to be quite contrary. So also there is great glory in the sufferings of his people ever since; and all the glory is his, for it is for his cause and by the assistance of his Spirit they suffer. 1. It is for the glory of his

person. 2. Of his works of preaching and miracles. 3. Of his sufferings and death. 4. Of his resurrection. 5. Of his ascension. 6. Of his guiding his church till the end. 7. Of his last coming to judgment.

Now, a word, how it is they are unsearchable, and how far lawfully we may and ought to search. They are unsearchable, because infinite and incomprehensible by our shallow understandings. Angels do pry into them, and with a holy kind of curiosity desire to know more and more of the mysteries of the gospel; but even their understanding, though far above ours, cannot comprehend them fully. We may search into them upon these conditions: 1. That we go not beyond what is revealed in the word. Our natural curiosity is here carefully to be bounded and limited "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," (Isa. viii. 20). 2. That we in searching from the word, labour to have the Spirit to open these things unto us, and to sanctify our hearts to receive them suitably. An irreverent fearless searching into these things even from the word, may ruin us as much as going beyond the word: for as we cannot be preserved from error in judgment, if we be not guided by the light of the word; so, there are heart-errors we cannot escape, if we have not the Spirit with the word. 3. Our end in searching must be sincere; not to satisfy our understandings, by attaining to some apprehensions of these noble things, but to have the graces of the Spirit in our souls revived, and in life, love, reverence.

For the uses of these truths, they are more than can be numbered easily.

USE 1. I would recommend this duty to you, to

be much in the meditation of the riches and excellency of Jesus Christ. It may be, some may think the time better spent in studying to know some profound notions and truths concerning other points of religion. This I am sure of, that the solid life of religion, and power of godliness, consist in these points that many giddy people may think common and easily known; and that it is a sad token of a decayed backslidden soul, when such things are become unsavoury, and when they itch after other things more remote from heart-exercise in godliness. But to those who savour the things of God, I would recommend this study unto them, and that from these advantages:

1. By this mean you shall attain unto more conformity unto Jesus Christ in his glorious holiness. And is not this very desirable? Conversing with him by faith and love would make it remarkable to enemies that you have been with Jesus, (Acts iv. 13). Beholding his glory worketh a glorious change into the same image in the beholder: "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," (2 Cor. iii. 18).

2. By this you shall attain unto fellowship with him, (1 John i. 1, 2, 3). And this is the very life of a believer, the health of his countenance.

3. You shall hereby attain unto a quickening and reviving of all the graces of his Spirit in you. All graces act in him and his fulness, and there is not a more native way of getting these brought out into actings, than by serious meditation on this blessed object.

4. And lastly, and consequentially from the former,

you shall attain unto such sweet manifestations of these riches in him which no tongue can express,—which are best known by feeling. You will see his loveliness, and find manifestations of his love to you in particular. You shall know what that joy unspeakable and glorious (1 Pet. i. 8), that fulness of joy is (1 John i. 4); yea, to be filled with all the fulness of God, (Ephes. iii. 19).

USE 2. It is this blessed One, and his riches and excellency, which we would recommend unto all that are yet strangers unto him. Riches are a great attractive: where are there any comparable to those in him? If your hearts be capable of affection to a lovely object, here is the fairest of the sons of men. If you desire happiness, come here and get it. Are you afraid of wrath and hell?—come here to the shelter and high tower.

USE 3. We would recommend them unto the Lord's own. Here is strong consolation, and good hope through grace. In these cases, doth the sense of sin in its guilt exercise you?—see here riches of merit in him to satisfy justice on your account: act faith on him, and you are secure from all hazard. Is the strength of temptations your exercise, and the power of a body of death?—here are riches of healing and sanctifying grace. Do you doubt of your interest in God, and of your title to heaven? I answer from this, "Have you an interest in these riches or not?" If you think you have not, then labour to have an interest in them, and you have it, if you ask it seriously. If you dare not deny a claim to Christ, and yet doubt of your salvation, you sin greatly; for he will lose none of his own, and hath confirmed it by his word and oath. Are you exercised with the

case of the Lord's public work, and of the interests of his glory and kingdom in the world? It is a noble exercise; oh, if it were more common and ordinary! Yet, fear not; he will deal prudently; he shall be exalted and entitled, and made very high. He cannot faint nor be discouraged: he will accomplish his purposes, gather in his elect, and perform all his promises to his people, and his threatenings against all his enemies. The greatest part of his work is already done: justice is satisfied, the price is paid and accepted, and the captives shall go free. It is long since he said, "He comes quickly," and he will perform it in due time; and then shall we see more of the excellency and riches of Christ than we either could believe, or hear, or think of; the wicked to their eternal sorrow, and the godly to their everlasting joy.

USE 4. What a sad matter is it that such an excellent one hath so little of our love and affection! All loveliness is in him, and all our love is called for; and where it is elsewhere bestowed, it is but sinfully wasted upon vanity. As in all things he hath the pre-eminence in point of perfection in himself, so ought he above all things to have the pre-eminence in the affections of our souls. There are three attractives of love among men—excellency and worth, near relationship, and obligations and favours; all of which are eminently in him.

USE 5. Of instruction. Are there unsearchable riches in him, and in some sort unsearchable emptiness and poverty in us?—here is a blessed match and meeting. Think not to live upon your own store and stock, but upon his. When you want any thing,

come hither for supply, for here only it is to be had. Fear not that this treasure can be exhausted. It is a great sin to desire to live upon our own sufficiency. The poor in spirit are pronounced blessed, but only such as seek the unsearchable riches of Christ.

# SERMON

ON

## PHILIPPIANS II. 12, 13.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his goodpleasure."—PHILIP. II. 12, 13.

THERE be two great evils in judgment and practice, which in all ages of the Church have, upon the right and left hand, made many to pervert the straight ways of the Lord. One is, a pleading for and practising of a carnal liberty from gospel duties and commands, upon a woful mistake of the nature of gospel privileges, and of the dispensation of the grace of God therein. This is a turning of the grace of God into wantonness. Another extreme is, a turning of gospel commands into legal, and a pleading so for obedience thereunto; self-ability (abstract from the influences of grace) to perform that obedience, and a proper merit resulting from that performance, that confidence in the flesh is proclaimed, and the grace of God made a cypher. What influence the former hath had in the raising and maintaining of the heresies of the Antinomians, Familists, Quakers, &c., none but strangers in our Israel can be ignorant. And what influence the other extreme

hath had in raising the Arminian, Popish, and Socinian heresies, all that are acquainted with the case of the church of God, both abroad and at home, do know but too sadly. Yea, how great an influence the darkness and confusion in the minds of many of the Lord's people concerning the due harmony of the sovereign influence of the grace of God, with the natural liberty of the will concurring; the due acknowledgment of the necessity of that influence, and the obligation to the practice of duties, notwithstanding of the want of it, hath upon their spiritual condition, every one who hath an ear to hear, and a heart to understand, and grace to search his own heart, doth in some measure know.

Therefore, though it be not so wholly suitable to the nature of this exercise, to prosecute debates with the adversaries of truth; yet because of the advantage that those on either extreme do pretend to have hence for their error, and the real advantage which this place doth give to refute the one and the other, I shall therefore, ere I come to the practical improvement of them, glance a little at both. In which handling, I shall divide the text, give the literal meaning, clear it from their objections, point out the things here held out, with their influence on our practice in religion.

These words come in among the gracious exhortations which the Holy Ghost giveth by Paul's pen unto these believing Philippians. In the beginning of the twelfth verse, the apostle, having praised their former obedience, whereof he was a witness whilst among them, and expressed his charitable confidence of their continuance and increase in that obedience, even in his absence, as an insinuatory preface unto

what he was to say; he then setteth down a most weighty exhortation, and backeth it with an encouraging argument, in verse 13th. In the exhortation are three things: 1. The act itself in the duty enjoined, " work out." 2. The subject-matter whereabout this act is to be exercised, " your own salvation." 3. The qualification of this act about this subject, " with fear and trembling."

As to the first, there needs little to be said of it, it being so very clear. It is not simple working, but a *diligence* in working called for, and continuance in that diligence, until the perfect end of the work be attained. This is the force of the original word.

The second—the subject-matter wherabout this act is to be exercised—" your own salvation." We shall not stand upon the various acceptations of this word in scripture, as sometimes signifying the means of salvation, (Heb. ii. 3; 1 Pet. i. ix); sometimes the saving effect of those means upon the called (2 Tim. i. 9); sometimes the accomplishment of this begun salvation in heaven. We take it not here as importing both beginning, progress, and perfection of salvation; for he is speaking to those in whom the work was already begun, as in chap. i. verse 6. But the evidence of the scope bindeth us to aver, that here the apostle presseth them to a diligent advancing, and a constant progress in the work and course of their salvation, the way of truth and holiness, wherein already they were engaged. This salvation is called " their own," not that the doctrine of it was of their own devising and framing; or that their walking up unto that doctrine by faith and obedience, was of their own strength (in that sense, salvation is only of the Lord, and Christ is the inventor of the doctrine,

and the author and finisher of the work of salvation); but that it was theirs by a gifted right and possession. They were the parties to whom the doctrine of salvation was imparted, in whom it was begun, and on whom it was to be accomplished.

The third thing is, the qualification of this commanded exercise, "with fear and trembling." This, enemies to the certainty and assurance of faith, and to the perseverance of the faithful, draw to their advantage. In opposition to which mistake, I shall only give the meaning of this word, and confirm it from the analogy of faith, and the context, omitting what the deluded Quakers may allege hence for their energumenical shakings, as unworthy of any regard. All agree, that by *fear* and *trembling* one and the same thing is signified. This qualification of duty is several times used, sometimes in cases different from this, as in 1 Corinthians ii. 3; Ephesians, vi. 5; sometimes in cases that are as it were parallel with this, as Psalm ii. 11; Rom. xi. 20. All which do clear us in this, that it is only humility, sense of our own weakness and infirmity, which is here called for; and if you will, include in it the filial fear of God; which do no way plead for doubting and diffidence as to the issue, which is the thing their adversaries plead for. For the security of saints, and the certainty of their perseverance, is not founded upon any thing in themselves, but upon the veracity of the promiser, the always effectual intercession of Christ, and the indwelling of the Spirit. So that a holy fear of falling because of sinful weakness, can no ways shake these foundations.

But that we may further clear the nature of the fear called for, omitting many distinctions used by

divines in this case, we shall only name this: Fear is either of the issue—hell; or of the means leading to it—sin; both either absolute or conditional. Absolute fear of hell is despair; diametrically opposite to faith, and forbidden by all these commands in scripture, requiring faith and trusting in the Lord, as a part of our worship. Conditional fear of hell; that is, "I fear hell, if I walk in the ways leading unto it," is a sanctified mean of God's appointment for escaping it, by eschewing of those ways that lead unto it. Absolute fear about the means; that is, that I be given up wholly to a final neglect of the means of grace, and to a total revolting from God, in the practice of sin without repentance, is all one with despair; and is forbidden by the whole tenour of the covenant of grace. Conditional fear about the means, that is, "I fear, if I watch not, and do not lean unto Christ's strength, I may fall into sin," is also a sanctified mean for escaping of sin, and so of the fear of hell. And this is all one with Calvin's distinction upon this place. "There is a fear," saith he, "which begets carefulness in duty with humility (which is here required); and a fear which begets anxious doubting in whatever required." Hence it is observable in experience, and evident in spiritual reason, that the more there be in any, of this holy conditional fear, and the more fruitful it be in its native effects of humility, diligence, self-denial, and trusting in their Lord's strength, the more clear is the man's assurance of salvation. And this sense of the words, is much confirmed by the subsequent words. For what an absurd consequence would the adversaries make of it! "God works both to will and to do: therefore,

do you your duty *doubtingly*, without any assurance of the end."

This leads us to the second, wherein we have, 1. The causal particle *for* knitting these words, as an encouraging argument with the former. 2. Who it is that is the author of this encouragement;—God. 3. Wherein his help consisteth; efficaciously working both to will and to do: *efficaciously* as the original imports. 4. The fountain from whence this help flows—his free will, "good pleasure." Not that which simply denotes his sovereignty in doing or not doing as he pleaseth, (which would not so agree with the scope); but that kindly favour which he bears to his own in Jesus Christ, which though he manifest it sovereignly in some sort, yet is it always with a respect to their good.

Concerning almost all of these, the enemies of truth do move debates. But not to be tedious in these matters, especially in an exercise of this nature, I shall only hint at some few things, which may clear the truth, and remove any objection the adversaries do propound against them. As, 1. That such commands as are here do not infer any thing but obligation to duty; and no ways any ability to perform them, or any merit in performance. 2. That the determining influence of the grace of God upon the will is consistent with its natural liberty. 3. How that the acknowledging of this influence doth take away any ground of being called co-workers with God in the business of our salvation, in the Popish and Arminian sense, and yet giveth no ground to the libertine extreme. 4. How that this assorting of the whole into grace is an argument to diligence.

First, That this command to "work out" doth not import self-ability to obey, nor any merit to result from obedience, is so clear from the connection of the argument with the command, that I would not so much as have started it, if the natural corruption of men's hearts were not so extravagant as it is, and that adversaries do make use of it, and the learned, in commenting upon the place, do remove it.

1. The prime import of all commands to duty, is a revelation of God's will of obedience; and as they hold forth what his will is about duty, so they infer an obligation to performance. 2. That the Lord being holy and just, requireth nothing but what is or was in the power of the person commanded to obey, either in his own person or in his representative. 3. That gospel commands, in their prime import, are of the same nature with legal; and consequently, men are punished for disobedience of the one as well as of the other, because, legally considered, they were in their representatives endued with power to obey. 4. Yet gospel commands, as given by the Lord to his own covenanted people, are sanctified means for working and procuring of obedience. Not that they are a moral mean, to stir up the godly to exert any strength in themselves in performing acts of obedience; but, 1. Because they discover the Lord's will, and their obligation to obedience thereto: 2d, Because from this accidentally is discovered their inability to yield obedience as in themselves, which produces self-denial. 3d, From this floweth, by the Lord's blessing, acts of faith upon the fulness and sufficiency of their Surety, wherein stands their stability and strength for all things, (Philip. iv. 13). Yea, we may say, that in all gospel commands, as tendered

to those in Christ, there is included a promise of grace to obey; and in this they are distinguished from legal commands. But the simple reading of these words, and the considering of the connection of the argument with the command, is enough to silence such cavillers, if the verdict of the Holy Ghost pronounced against their error were enough to silence them: the words that follow, containing the fullest expressions of the entire help of God's grace, which a godly man stands in need of, both for willing and doing; and consequently, of the weakness of a regenerate man, as in himself considered.

The second thing to be cleared is, How the determining influence of the grace of God upon the will (here asserted) consisteth with its natural liberty. This is a depth wherein many learned heads and unholy hearts have drowned; and, indeed, it is a very great one. It shall suffice us to lay down the positive truth, that there is no inconsistency betwixt the two; which may thus be cleared:

1. All creatures being necessarily dependent, both in their being and operation, upon the First Cause, man's will being a creature, it cannot, either in sound reason or divinity, be asserted that it is independent from this general concourse or influence wherein stands the very being and working of every creature.

2. This holy Creator and Preserver of all things having necessarily before him, as his end in creation and providence, his own glory, hath by his wise decrees determined so the actings of all his creatures, as may best subserve his infinitely wise designs. So that man's will must again fall under a determination because of such decrees.

3. And as the will of man is thus necessarily liable

to a double determination, as it is a creature, so in its being made such a creature, a subordinated faculty, to be led and determined by the understanding, it again falleth under a restriction of that unlimited liberty pleaded for; for being in itself a blind faculty (or a rational appetite, as some define it), it cannot move towards any thing but what the understanding holdeth out as good, either true or apparent. Hence may be seen somewhat of the manner of the Lord's influence upon the will of man; for it is evident that the illuminating influence of grace upon the understanding is perfective of its natural capacity of discerning, both *in via contemplanda*, which is the theoretical judgment, and *in via agenda hic et nunc*, which is the practical, both in its first and absolute judgment concerning things good or bad, and in its comparative judgment concerning things better or worse;—from which determinations of the understanding, follows such a commanding of the will to choose or refuse, that it cannot but elicit the one of these acts, and that most freely.

4. Hence it follows that the natural liberty of the will doth not consist in an absolute indifferency to act thus or otherwise, good or bad, but in the special towardness, cheerfulness, and liberty of its acting; for the only necessity inconsistent with this, is that of force and coaction. And indeed, the asserting of the will's liberty, as adversaries do, doth not only loose this proud faculty from its due dependence on the concurrence and decrees of its Maker, but lifteth it up unto a higher pitch of liberty than can lawfully be ascribed to God himself, who cannot will what is ill; and to angels and glorified saints, who are graciously determined to will only what is good.

III. How that the ascribing of this unto God doth deny our being workers together with God, in the Popish sense, and yet is opposite unto the Libertine extreme.

The Papists would so divide the work, that they may share the glory between God and man,—the Libertines would make a man a brute or a stone. Against the first, we say, that either it must be at the first of conversion, or in the progress of sanctification. At the first of conversion, the Lord's work is entirely enlivening; and man's influence on the effect is such as a dead man can have upon his own quickening, which in nature is evident can be none at all, (Ephes. ii. 1, 2). And though, in the infusion of the new life, there be indeed gracious habits infused, qualifying the man for gracious actings, yet these habits are not sufficient either to preserve themselves from total decay, or to determine their possessor unto the least gracious operation, without a present actuating influence from the fountain whence they first ran. For we do not maintain the activity, yea, nor immortality of grace, as flowing from its own positive nature, but rather its relative (so to speak); that is, it is no self-sufficient habit, but the continuance of its sufficiency, that flows from the continuance of its dependence on the first fountain; which dependence the Lord, by the well-ordered covenant, hath determined to be incorruptible,—a grace, therefore, immortal. Therefore, in the bringing out of these gracious habits into gracious actings, the actual influence of actuating grace is absolutely needful: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me,"

(John xv. 4). "Without me (χωρις εμου), or separate from me, and my influence, as the root, ye can do nothing,"—which was spoken to branches already in the vine. Here the believer (as Calvin expresseth it in his Institutions), "*passivè agit*," or, as others, "*actus agit*,"—being acted upon graciously, he acts graciously. How evidently these clear principles exclude all boasting, is evident; but we will not stand on this.

But to guard against the other extreme: We do not say that a godly man is wholly passive in gracious actings; for, 1. He acts with these same natural faculties in all gracious operations, wherein the gracious habits are seated—as judgment and affections. 2. Neither are we wholly to deny, yet very warily to understand and admit it, that as other moral habits are strengthened by repeated acts, so, in the growth of sanctification, the habits of grace do acquire a greater positive strength than at first infusion; and consequently, a man far advanced in holiness hath a greater disposition, easiness, and facility (simply considered) in exerting gracious operations, than another in whom the habits are not so much corroborate by exercise in the Lord's ways. Hence the scripture distinction of Christians into fathers, young men, and children. But though we are to keep at a distance from any thought of the best their being able to do any thing that is good, without actual influence of grace, yet is it consonant to spiritual reason and experience to say, that the influences needful for actuating strong gracious habits unto gracious actions, are simply not so powerful and mighty (sufficient they must always be) as necessarily are in bringing forth decayed languid habits into act, (Psalm li. 10).

The last thing is, How that this argument can have influence upon diligence in obedience. Carnal reason and its carnal patrons do plead, that this is the highway to render men secure and careless in duty. And it cannot indeed be denied, that it may have such an effect, and often hath, on sensual men not having the Spirit. Not to stay upon a debate which, as to its practical use, may afterward be spoken to, we would only say, 1. That the apostle in our text is speaking to godly persons who were already diligent in their work—who, being partakers of the divine nature, were capable of being moved with gracious principles. 2. Evangelical arguments are all encouragements and promises, which as they are only the portion of the godly, so, such do find strong influence accompanying such arguments, for the inspiring unto diligence. The adversaries plead only for legal arguments, and such as natural reason teacheth. Yea, what stronger argument can be used to a poor soul ready to faint because of the greatness of its work, than this, "Arise, and be doing; for the Lord will work in you both to will and to do?"

But now, it is high time to come to the observations contained in these words, omitting what may be observed from the connection, since there is such plenty of excellent matter in the words themselves.

OBSERV. 1. The great improvement which the Holy Ghost calleth the saints to lay to heart, and the great duty which a faithful minister layeth upon his flock, is that of their own salvation. This design of the apostle in writing to his flock (such the Philippians were, see chap. iv. verse 1), and the scope of the Holy Ghost in recording it for the Church in all ages, doth make out the truth of this—a truth shin-

ing so in its own evidence, and confirmed by the scope of the whole book of God, that it were superfluous to prove it.

USE. Let it then be the subject of your most serious thoughts; and these two considerations in particular, 1. That it is *salvation*, a matter of highest concernment. 2. It is your *own*—a matter of your nearest concernment. The former claimeth evidently a superiority above worldly interests. Oh! how low are they in respect of salvation. It supposeth danger, and the greatest danger: none need salvation, but such as are lost. None can lay it to heart aright, but those who lay to heart their lost condition. "What shall I do to be saved?" the question of every serious soul, importeth both. The latter—your interest in it—calls for a superiority in concernment beyond that of others simply considered. Every one should be careful of another's soul, but more of his own soul's salvation—such suitable concernment therein, as nature's light draweth a man to what most nearly relates to himself. And that is very great, and *the* greatest.

OBSERV. 2. To be rightly exercised about this matter, much labour and pains is called; this is the *strait* gate; and that even from such as have been exercised therein diligently, as the Philippians were. This is confirmed, 1. From its importance. It is the one thing needful, and therefore our singular endeavours are called for in pursuing it. 2. From the great and mighty opposition that is made unto a man in this work, from many and strong enemies. Strong impediments in the way of an important design call for much diligence. Force is against us, and subtlety, and continuance in both by our enemies. 3. From

the commonness of a mistake in this matter, that it is easy; and from want of diligence therein. "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke xiii. 24).

USE. What shall be said of those who have not yet begun to be exercised in this great matter? Is salvation an indifferent thing? Is it attainable without pains? Whatever diligence hath been used by any in it, continuance and increase therein are called for. Trifling endeavours are reproveable here, as unsuitable to so great and important a business.

OBSERV. 3. In diligence with this great work, much humility and sense of our own infirmity are called for, with fear and trembling. And the grounds of this are evident, if we consider ourselves, and compare ourselves with our enemies—our weakness, with the greatness of the work; or if we reflect on our former experience in verification of this. And they are evident, if comparing both, we look wisely to what is to come. Opposition of enemies constantly increaseth, and the violence of their assaults.

USE. How unreasonable is confidence in ourselves in this great work! How reproveable are proud undertakers in their own strength! This calleth for a constant remembrance of all those humbling considerations, and self-denial in that remembrance. But lest it should degenerate,

OBSERV. 4. Whatever ground of fear there be as from self, yet it is the great encouragement of the saints, that the Lord is the helper in this work. The absolute sufficiency of this helper in this work, is evident, from his infinite fulness and sufficiency in himself, which is a great depth. But it may be more

evident, by taking some parts of this sufficiency, and comparing it with the wants of the saints, and its perfect suitableness will appear. Infinite power is for the supply of great weakness against strong enemies; infinite wisdom, for the cure of folly in dealing with politic enemies; infinite love, for putting forth such wisdom and power for their good. And unchangeable truth is engaged by promises and oaths, that such power, wisdom, and love, shall never leave them.

USE. How reproveable are they who do not set about this work because of discouragements; and such as carry it on discouragedly!

OBSERV. 5. Entire help is given by this sufficient helper. It is not an empty title. "To will and to do"—this is actual help, and that, entirely suited to our necessity: for there are but two things necessary unto all actions,—will, and power of performance; and both are here.

USE. Learn to acknowledge him, and wait for his help entirely. Both in willing and doing, set about nothing in this work in your own strength, and doubt not of his.

OBSERV. 6. The fountain whence all this floweth is his free will and good pleasure. Of his will he begat us freely, (James i. 18); and freely he doth all.

USE. Look not to any thing of desert in yourself. Bless him for his help vouchsafed. Be not peremptory, but wait patiently, when help seemeth to be delayed. His sovereignty is to be acknowledged.

OBSERV. 7. The consideration of this entire help is a great argument to diligence.

USE. Try what ye find of the force of this, and try yourselves by it.

# SERMON

ON

## 1 CORINTHIANS II. 10.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—1 Cor. ii. 10.

NEITHER do the faithful preachers of the gospel, nor its conscientious hearers, make any doubt of this matter of mourning,—that the frame of men's minds who are exercised about these things, is sadly unsuitable unto their greatness and importance. For convincing you of this, if not the curing of this distemper, we have made choice of this scripture.

Two things are main causes of this distemper; and the due faith of them would be the cure. 1. Men's not pondering with whom they have to do in the preaching of the word. Little do the careless hearers of the gospel dream that it is God the Holy Ghost that is dealing with them in the preached word. 2. Ignorance of, or not adverting unto the greatness and importance of the truths delivered unto them. Few think that they are the depths of God.

We shall take a view of the preceding part of the chapter which is needful for understanding the apostle's scope, and so for getting and reaching his mind. We have an account of his way of behaving in his ministry amongst them; and that, we may branch out into these heads:

1. That he came not with a vain flourish of worldly rhetoric and carnal wisdom (verse 1), because this, he hints, had been unsuitable unto the grave work he had to do amongst them—even the testimony of God: a testimony that had abundance of majesty and truth for its convoy, and had been but disparaged with carnal paintings of words.

2. That his behaving thus was according to his settled resolution, (verse 2). He had laid down this brave resolution to preach Christ and him crucified amongst them, though there was no want of worldly wisdom amongst that people; which even many of them, after conversion, and who were ministers, did too much follow; whom also he is probably reflecting on, as afterwards in chapter iv. verse 18, he doth it more expressly.

3. We have a positive account of his humble behaviour (verse 3), in words that may astonish us, that even a holy fear of miscarrying in so great a work, and a deep sense of his weakness, as of himself for this great work, was deeply lodged in the spirit of this eminent apostle; so that if we compare this with the wonderful assistance that he had, and large measure of all gifts given him, it is a rare proof of grace and humility in him.

4. We have a further account of his way of preaching, both in enlarging on the former negative, and in asserting the positive, wherein he states an opposition between the two; teaching, in the first place, that a faithful minister should hide man and human parts, and wisdom, as much as may be, in dispensing the gospel; and in the second, that ordinarily there is most of the power and demonstration of the Spirit attending such ways of dispensing the gospel, wherein

all carnal wisdom is most denied. That you may not mistake this, I shall clear up what is this evidence of the Spirit that attends preaching, and what there is of man contrary to it.

The evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of power, is the efficacy of the word on consciences, produced by the influences of the Holy Ghost: this efficacy is, by a displaying of the authority of God, and a forcible bearing in of the light of truth on the mind, and its power on the heart and conscience. "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," (2 Cor. iv. 2). In these times, we confess, that this evidence of the Spirit was sometimes conveyed by the means of miracles: but these did only confirm the truth as God's, while the making it effectual on the heart, was by another and nearer operation of the Spirit on men's hearts. And what is that which is opposite unto it? In general, it is when men think to do this, and work such an effect on people's hearts, without the Spirit's help. As, *first*, When they propose with such clearness of forcible reason what they think is enough to persuade any rational man to yield his assent unto it, that they think no man can shut out the light. *Secondly*, When they use such forcible motives to persuade, that they think no man can resist them. Now, though this way be in itself very lawful, if scripture light and arguments be made use of, yet its fault is, when the Holy Ghost is not duly depended on, as the only bearer in of light and life upon the soul, and men give too much to the means in themselves.

5. We have the end he aimed at in this way,—that their faith might not be seen to be wrought by, and to stand upon man's wisdom, but God's power, (verse 5), intimating clearly, that the faith of the hearers is much according to the way of the preachers. A false unsound profession may be begotten by a carnally-wise way of handling the things of God, and so, they may be said rather to gain disciples, than the Lord's true believers, by such ministrations.

And this leadeth us to the words which are brought in as an answer to another objection,—How came you then to know such a mystery? He answers, by revelation of the Spirit. In the words we have, 1. The way whereby the apostle and the godly come to the knowledge of the mystery hid from the world—God's revealing them by his Spirit. 2. The sufficiency of this way and mean proved—"for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God."

For the explaining of these things, there is great heed to be taken of the words. We must know what is meant by "God." It is specially here meant of the Father, who, as he is the "father of lights," so also in a special manner, of all the knowledge of himself and his will that is to be found amongst men. "Revealed," that is, hath taken off the hiding veil that was on them. "Unto us," to me, Paul, and Sosthenes, and other faithful servants of Jesus Christ. "By his Spirit," by the special efficacy of the Holy Ghost, whereby what we of ourselves could never come unto the knowledge of, by his working are clearly discerned. Next, as to the sufficiency of this mean—this revealer is the great searcher of all things; that is, he is well acquaint with all, even the depths of God, as a man is, with such things as he hath

searched out unto the bottom, and unto perfection: which, by the way, is a solid proof that the Holy Ghost is God.

Our main design in pitching upon this verse, was for the last words of it; yet we shall speak somewhat also unto the other things in it, but more briefly, and for preparing our way unto the other principal thing.

OBSERV. 1. All discovery of the saving truths of God flows from his gracious revelation thereof by his Spirit.

In handling of this we shall, first, Show what this revelation is; secondly, Prove it by the insufficiency of any other mean to attain such a discovery.

1. What is this revealing of divine truth by the Spirit? We are, for understanding of this aright, to distinguish the several revelations that the Lord hath given to his church. And these are, 1. The revelation made unto the fathers and prophets of old, varied in circumstances, until Moses' time, by visions, and oracles, and tradition from father to son; thereafter, by the lawgiver Moses; and thereafter unto the prophets—all which were but more clear breakings forth of the same divine truth, consonant to itself, and harmonious as to the matter, though with different circumstances; and this by the Spirit of Christ, (1 Pet. i. 11). 2. That rare and matchless revelation by the Lord himself, who had the Spirit without measure, (Heb. i. 1). Which albeit for the authority of the Messenger it was matchless, (so is he called in Mal. iii. 1), yet in that dispensation, there were for wise reasons many truths then kept back. 3. The revelation unto the Apostles, and by them to the Church; who had the greatest measure of the Spirit of God attending them, that ever mere men had—according

to the promise in John xiv. and xv., and its fulfilment in Acts ii. 4. The revelation that is made unto the church by the sealed and complete canon of the Holy Scriptures, the native product of the Holy Ghost, (2 Pet. i. 21; 2 Tim. iii. 16). This is the great revelation; and by this, the Spirit revealeth now unto the church the deep things of God. And there needs no more but what the godly obtain—the same Spirit that did indite them by his penmen,—to make them plain and powerful on our hearts.

In the second place, we shall prove the insufficiency of any other means to attain the knowledge of these things. And this is evident from, 1. The gross ignorance of them that have had nature's light most refined; the Greeks and Romans before Christ's time. Not only supernatural truth was not reached by them, but any ordinary Christian may now discover how lame they were, even in pursuing after and attaining the knowledge of truths accessible by nature's light —as in their multitude of gods, and gross sins in practice. 2. The lamentable blindness of the world, and all nations everywhere that want this revelation altogether, or have it let out unto them by little, and unfaithfully, as in the Popish church. 3. The sad ignorance of them that have this revelation read by and to them, and explained and expounded daily unto them. Surely it saith, that men, by themselves, can never attain the knowledge of these things. 4. The main truths are evidently out of the reach of nature's light. There are many that nature's light revealeth, such as the being of God, the unity of the Godhead; his power, wisdom, and spiritual nature, (Rom. i. 20; Acts xvii.) the immortality of the soul, a life of retribution and rewards—and that there is another world

of spiritual inhabitants, as many apparitions have proved even to the heathen. But the Trinity of persons, the union of two natures in the Son of God, and the whole continuance of salvation, and several other things about the two covenants, are undiscoverable by nature's light.

USE 1.—Be deeply thankful for this revelation. Alas for the sin of ingratitude and unthankfulness, and that, for this greatest mercy! To move you to a deep thankfulness, consider, that this is the most gracious revelation that God ever gave to mankind. It is of the greatest things in themselves, and of things of the greatest usefulness even for eternal salvation. And consider, that it is a most full and clear revelation. Even they that had extraordinary ways of revelation, had but a little of that revealed, that is plentifully now revealed unto us all in the word. It is a most sure way of revelation, not exposed unto those doubts and mistakes in which even extraordinary ways did leave men. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts," (2 Pet. i. 19). It is every way sufficient for the end designed, (2 Tim. iii. 15): the Spirit's going along with it, makes it sufficient for saving knowledge. It is a revelation given unto a small part of the world—and what are you better than the Indians that dwell in the shadow of death?

USE 2.—Oh! labour to make a good use of it. Improvement is all and the main thing this matter calls for. It stands, 1. In opening your eyes, and lending your ears to what is revealed, and in studying it. The study of the word, as the great revelation of the

Holy Ghost, is rarely practised. Shall the Holy Ghost reveal, and men not open their eyes, and lend their ears? 2. In studying and taking heed thereunto, as his revelation. Many study and read the word, without this sanctifying qualification of all such endeavours. It is just with the Lord, that when men in a careless and profane contempt slight this aid, he should give them up unto blindness and erring mistakes. 3. In seeking humbly and fervently the help of the Holy Ghost in this search. Little profiting by it is to be hoped for without this. 4. And in all, driving at that end that the revelation is made for, to make you wise unto salvation; and unto all the means that lead unto it, and fit and prepare you for it. Unsanctified aims in studying divine truth, have led many into woful error.

The next thing is, concerning the omniscience, and perfect knowledge of God the Holy Ghost; of which we shall not speak, save for clearing of the matter, "for the Spirit." And that you may know, saith the apostle, how sufficient this is, it is a revelation from him who is all-knowing; who "searcheth all things," not for increase of knowledge, as a man searcheth out unknown things, but to shew the perfection of his knowledge of them; even as a man doth, of what hath cost him a most narrow and exact search. The Holy Ghost is fully and perfectly acquaint with all the great and deep things of God. Being one in essence, and all essential perfection, with the other two blessed persons, it cannot be otherwise. This serves to prove, that the Holy Ghost is God, and that the scriptures are a true, safe, and wise revelation of God's will unto men, since they come from one so well acquaint with all. But

that which we intend mainly to insist on is the last.

The mysteries of the Christian religion are "the deep things of God." And that this is the meaning of the expression "deep things of God," is clear from the following words, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual," (verses 11, 12, 13). Here he proves by a clear similitude, that the Holy Ghost only is fully acquaint with these; that all the godly have this spirit revealing those things to them; and that those things thus revealed, were the subject of his preaching. And the following words, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," (verse 14) prove, why they are called "deep things"—even because they are not obvious to a "natural man."

In handling of this great and grave truth, we shall show, 1. What are these deep things of God. 2. Why they are thus called; and, 3. Prove it in some particular truths.

1. What they are. Not to speak of any depths not revealed, for this were to darken counsel by words without knowledge, they are—scripture truths, such as we owe the knowledge of only to revelation, and which are no other ways attainable—gospel truths,

or such as broke up mostly with the manifestation of Jesus Christ in the gospel—and such as have the closest reference unto God's glory and the salvation of man. This is from their end, the great end of God's manifestation of himself unto the world.

2. Why are they called the deep things of God? Because of their own great depth: they are profound deep things, because of their relation unto God, and that, as being the author of the revelation of such truths, and the author and framer of the truths in themselves, and their relation to him, as the main matter and subject of them. They are the deep things that God hath made and revealed, and mainly, are depths about God, and to him, as the great end, even his glory and praise.

3. We shall prove it in particulars; and this is a most large subject, yet, because of its great usefulness, both for informing the ignorant in the sum of Christian doctrine, and convincing the careless of their depth, we shall enlarge on it, only premising, ing, that we have deep attention, deep humility, and deep reverence in hearing these things. We cannot speak of them all without an extraordinary length, and therefore we shall pitch only on the chief of the deep things of God, under these heads, 1. Such depths as are revealed about God himself. 2. Such as have an immediate relation unto man: for saving knowledge may be comprised under these two heads, the knowledge of God, and of ourselves.

I. These depths that are about, and concerning God himself, are, 1. His nature and being. The light of nature can discover a little of the being of God, and of his nature; but that full and deep account thereof that the scriptures give, it by no means

can reach. 2. His infinite incomprehensibleness. A created understanding can no more contain and comprehend his being, than a child's hand can span the heavens and earth, (Job. xi. 7, 8, 9). How great a length do men's understandings go in search of the creatures! 3. His great and deep justice and judgments, (Psalm xxxvi. 6; Rom. xi. 33), especially manifested in punishing sin with eternal vengeance. 4. His all-seeing eye; his perfect knowledge and omnipresence. It is a sad thing, that our thoughts of God are so far from what they ought to be. 5. The depth of divine patience in delaying threatened and deserved judgments.

2. The mystery of the Trinity is a great depth that many have drowned in, while they have not been humbly satisfied with the revelation of this in the word, but have offered to wade and fathom it by the force of their shallow understanding. One God in three persons is the greatest of all the depths of God; concerning which I have only to say, the light of nature could never discover it—and now that it is discovered, it is the main doctrine of all foundations of our religion, so that a denier of it, is by no means to be reckoned a Christian. And such monstrous apostates there are in the land, which should make us mourn and fear. And consider the dreadful consequents of denying this great truth. He that denieth the Son to be God, necessarily must deny his satisfaction to justice for sin, and the justification of a sinner, by a believing laying hold on this satisfaction; and accordingly he denies it. He that denieth the Holy Ghost to be God, must deny, and always doth, the omnipotency and sovereignty of his grace in converting a sinner, and in perfecting of him. And these

things are so close unto one another, that the deniers of the power of grace, are ofttimes left to the denying of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, the worker thereof. Consider concerning this depth, that there is none that calls for more deep reverence and fear in thinking thereof: and you ought also to have a more exact fear of any blasphemies that are vented directly or indirectly against the same. Come not near the tabernacles of those wicked men that blaspheme the God of heaven. It is astonishing to think what sort of professors they are that fear not at the sight and report of such blasphemies; I mean mainly the Quakers, the chief leaders of whom do expressly, and in print, blaspheme these doctrines, and therefore the which society is to be abhorred, unless they disown such blasphemies.

3. The third depth, is that of the incarnation of the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth," (John i. 14). Here are two natures in one person. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," (1 Tim. iii. 16). This is the sum of the gospel. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," (Rom. viii. 3, 4). That this is a great depth, and that no natural man can reach it by nature's light, is evident. But to take a careful

view of it, consider, 1. The inequality of the natures united, and the strictness of the union—God and man in one person. Oh, wonderful! the man's blood is called God's, (Acts xx. 28). The person God-man receiveth divine worship even when born. "And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," (Heb. i. 6). 2. The low depth of humiliation that God in this nature underwent, without any real abasement, (Philip. ii. 6, 7). All the creation is astonished at his sufferings. 3. The design of all this—the glory of grace in saving sinners, by striking up a new and brave way to heaven, so that that song only may for eternity be sung by its inhabitants, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, (Rev. i. 5, 6, and v. 9, 10, 12). The praises of such sinners, and their souls were so dear to him, that he underwent so much to purchase them.

4. The fourth deep is Predestination—that out of the same mass of fallen mankind, the Lord's sovereignty pitched on some to be the objects of his mercy, and left the rest to perish for their sins. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will

have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," (Rom. ix. 15, 16). And this is a great depth, (Rom. xi. 33). Here also many stumble, by the pride of their hearts, and treacherous winning of Satan. That this is a great depth, none can question; and all that search into it, find it so to be. For the understanding whereof, these things may help: 1. This is an act of God, as a sovereign Lord, and not as a judge. 2. He oweth nothing to any of his creatures, as they are his creatures, until he engage himself graciously by promise. 3. He oweth nothing to his sinful creatures, as sinful, but vengeance, the desert of their sin. If then, in the sovereignty of his love, he pitch on some, and leave others to their desert, who can quarrel? The *excellency* of this depth is seen, in that he hath wisely contrived a way for executing this decree by his son Jesus Christ, and reaps glory both to his mercy and justice eternally.

5. The fifth depth of God is, his creating and making all things of nothing. Oh, what a stately frame hath he made! That it is so, every one seeth; that God made it, any man may by reason know. Stones and earth are not likely things to make themselves, (Psalm civ. 24). How marvellous are they all! (Psalm cxi. 2, 3). The saints are frequently travelling in this deep, with wonder and adoration. This depth is the more seen, if we consider,

1st, The freedom of this great work. He might have suffered all things to have lain eternally in the womb of their mother nothing; he needed not any creation · yet gave he a being to such a huge number

of creatures in the air, earth, and water, besides the celestial bodies and their inhabitants.

2d, The wonderful wisdom that is therein in compacting the creation so wonderfully and orderly, in hanging the earth in the midst of the air, and the heavens round about and above it everywhere; in the orderly motion of the heavens; in bounding the sea, and making it so useful unto man by fishes and trading—his breaking up so many veins of fountains and rivers for the inhabitants of the earth:—in the winds that purge the air, and help unto sailing; in the course and motion of the sun for distinguishing the seasons of summer, winter, spring-time, and harvest; in broaching the clouds, that their waters may refresh the earth, and in such a manner to distil, as may benefit and not hurt.

3d, The power that is seen therein. Oh, what a strong arm must it be, that settled the foundation of the earth, and gave the heavens such a whirling motion at their first creation, that they never stand still, —in making so glorious a light as the sun, and so beautifully spangled a firmament—in making so great a sea, and limiting it so, that it overflows not the earth!

6. The sixth depth, is divine providence. This is, God's sustaining and governing the world that he hath so wisely made. Oh! what a depth is here of wisdom and power. Who could guide this world, but the same arm that made it? Let us launch out a little into this depth. There is the Lord's supporting of all things that he hath made: this is like a continued creation, a keeping them out of nothing, which were lately brought forth thence, (Acts xvii.), and his wise providing of food for every thing living

"These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season," (Psalm civ. 27, and cxlv. 15). What a great house doth he keep! But especially his deep acts of government are to be considered: he is the governor in the midst of the nations. Let us take notice of his providence toward the world,—1. Sovereignly: he sheweth himself in shaking and changing nations as he pleases, and kings and kingdoms. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35). He sits upon the floods; they have their shaking fits, even as human bodies. 2. In that he is still accomplishing his pleasure, and carrying on his wise, just, and holy designs, whatever men intend; yea, makes use of them that know him not, to accomplish his pleasure. But mainly do his depths of providence reach his church and people, 1. In making their enemies bring about their mercy. The murderers of Christ little knew what a blessing his church was to get by his death: Cyrus executes God's will, and fulfils prophecies that he little knoweth of, (Isa. xliv. 28, and xlv. 1–8). 2. In ripening them for mercy by strokes. They are humbled thereby, and fitted for receiving his deliverance. But because this leads us unto the other head of the depths of God, we shall therefore conclude with a word of application upon this branch of the subject.

Are the truths concerning God such depths? Then away with pride, and any opinion of understanding, as of ourselves to reach them, and find them out.

Much humility is called for in searching into them. and much reverence, and sense of the greatness of the matter. They are the depths of God, and this should make us fear. Then, labour to know God better; there are many depths of God that yet ye little know. Only take along with you still the lamp of the word —there must be no searching without this. And study God for the increase of grace, rather than of brain-knowledge. Search till you be brought to wonder and adore. Adore him, and invoke him in holy fear, in fervent love, with high praises, and with great trust and confidence.

II. As for those depths of God which concern man, I shall first speak unto that which is already past— the covenant of works made with our first parents, (Gen. ii.), and the breach thereof (Gen. iii.), and the punishment following on it. Which depth contains these things: 1. The Lord's creating our first parents out of the earth indeed, as to their bodies, but their souls of a higher original, and placing them in a most happy condition; and as to his friendship and favour, giving them dominion over the lower creation, and endowing them with great excellencies of body and mind. 2. His free engaging with them in a covenant, by fulfilling the condition whereof, their happiness might have been perpetuated to them, and their posterity. 3. His leaving them to the freedom of their own will, and not freeing them of temptations, though furnishing them with strength sufficient for standing out against them. 4. His speedy executing of the threatened punishment upon their disobedience; wherein we see his curse upon them, his extruding them from paradise; and that all their

posterity are born rebels to God, by guilt, and their own natural inclinations to ratify it.

That this is a great depth, is evident from these sad things that have followed on it: 1. That all are by nature enemies to God, and hateful to him. 2. That all the actual transgression that defiles the world, came in at this gap. 3. And all mankind that are in hell, came in hazard of it at first by this. 4. And that the Lord, though he hath provided a remedy, yet in the depth of his judgment he keeps up the knowledge of it from the greater part of mankind. 5. From men's corruption of nature, the greater part of them that hear of the remedy, receive it not.

2. The second depth concerning man, is the new covenant of grace by and in Jesus Christ,—a blessed depth!—a blessed plank for shipwrecked mankind to escape death by. This depth the angels desire to dive into, (1 Pet. i. 12, Ephes. iii. 10). This depth hath in it all the other deep things of God, to wit, the nature and attributes of God which shine here wonderfully; his wisdom, grace, justice, and mercy: —the mystery of the Trinity,—of the incarnation of the Son of God,—of predestination;—of a new creation, the greatest depth of divine providence. This is the great master axiom of divine wisdom, the brightest glass of his glory, casting the most glorious reflexions.

In this, consider 1. The parties covenanting, God the Father, and Son. It must be a stately bargain that they two make, full of majesty, wisdom, and truth. 2. The condition of this covenant—that the Son shall take on him our nature, and satisfy justice, and so save his people. 3. The fulfilling of these conditions in the Son's faithfulness to his Fa-

ther, and the Father's faithfulness to the Son: the one discovers the depth of Christ's sufferings; the other, of his purchase. Here is Christ's hell and our heaven. 4. For whom all this is done, and all this contrivance made—for sinners—unworthy, vile creatures. 5. What is made the condition on their part for obtaining a right to all this—receiving Christ's offer of himself as a competent Saviour by faith—an easy way for making so great a purchase, or rather, for the appropriation of his purchase unto ourselves!

Thus have we given you a hint of the depths of God; and for these ends—that you may know and lay to heart how nearly God is concerned in gospel truth: that you may see how unfit you are for searching them unto perfection: that you may study them more and more, since they have such a relation to him: that in the search, you may employ the Spirit of God to enlighten and guide you. Proud and careless searchers into the things of God, must necessarily stumble foully. Oh that people were wise and humble in these matters, and had the fear of God in their hearts!

# TWO SERMONS

ON

HEBREWS VI. 4, 5, 6.

## SERMON I.

"For it is impossible that those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."—HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6.

BECAUSE the depth of the purposes in these words requires somewhat more than ordinary explication, and application also, I thought it fit to insist on them in this exercise also,* and not to satisfy myself with our brief exposition. Many truths may be deduced from them, as we hinted in expounding; but it is the scope we shall attend unto mainly, and that, as it is relating to us, rather than to such a kind of apostacy of which none of us can possibly be guilty.

On all hands it is granted, that an account of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and its punishment, is here held forth unto us, as is most plain; and that there is such a sin, which man through his corrup-

* This and the following Sermon form the first part of a series in the original MS. consisting of four discourses, of which the last two are merely notes, and therefore unfit for publication.

tions and Satan's temptations may arrive unto, as shall render his salvation desperate. It is called from Matthew xii. 31, 32, a "sin unto death," (1 John v. 16), for the pardon whereof in another, we are not to pray. And here, and in Hebrews x. 29, it is spoken of as certainly damnable. All sin indeed is damnable in its nature; all sins may be damning in effect, without repentance and pardon; but this is always certainly damning.

The handling of the purpose here to your edification, labours under singular disadvantages, as—the difficulty that there is in finding out the nature of this great sin. The Lord hath left it so dark in the word, that many of his servants have had their different apprehensions about it, whereof I might give you a large list, though in these times, wherein light shineth more clearly about many other gospel truths, there is a greater agreement about it. It is—the deepest apostacy after the highest common operations of the Spirit. It is some disadvantage also, that Satan is so ready to assault many of the godly, with temptations about this; and where they prevail, they are the worst of all his darts. Yet have I adventured to handle this subject on these accounts, 1. To use it as a reason against security and arrogancy in godliness, and as a preventive of the same deadly evil. 2. To encourage the truly godly, and arm them against Satan's temptations to this evil, or persuading them that they are guilty of it. 3. Because it comes in very seasonably upon the preceding purpose of men's standing out against Christ; which is so deep a subject, that it requires a strict and exact handling. And, 4. To prevent or remove the scandal to the gospel by men's apostacy.

Our method in our discourse is this—1. To remove any mistakes that this portion of the word not rightly understood may occasion. And the main end is this —that they that have saving and true grace, may fall away:—and therefore, we shall prove, how it is not of such, but merely of *professors* that the apostle speaks. And for clearing our path in this, we must compare these verses with verses 7 and 8, and especially 9, 10, 11, and 12, where he is speaking certainly to the truly godly amongst them. And so we have these comparisons, 1. Here are "gifts" and "tastings," that is, faith working by love. 2. How few are the men called and counted amongst Christians, that are sensible souls fleeing for refuge to Christ. 3. Here are things glorious indeed, but not accompanying salvation; but in some, going before it, in others, without it. 4. Here the apostle supposeth a possibility of falling away, of those who are persuaded to the contrary. So that it is evident, that the danger hinted in these words concerns bare professors only, and not them that are true converts; yea, it is remarkable, that in this same chapter, the apostle saith as much for the certainty of the faith and perseverance, and salvation of true believers, as any where in the word. "God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." (verses 17, 18, 19).

Our next work shall be, to premise some truth

from the words themselves, that may clear our way: 1. That these attainments the apostle speaks of, are in themselves excellent things, and greatly to be valued; being great tokens of a more special favour of God to them to whom they are given, than to them from whom they are withheld. 2. The having of them, as it is a mercy, so the truly godly have them all, and more. 3. The apostle doth not threaten any that have these things, save such as do not duly use them to an increase and obtaining of what is better still.

Our discourse now shall be on these heads, 1. What great attainments a mere professor may have. 2. How deeply he may fall from them, and notwithstanding of them. 3. What is the danger of such an apostacy.

I. Such as shall be damned eternally may attain unto great things in religion. The truth of this is so plain, and so well known in the word (see Matthew vii. 21, and xiii. 20, 21), that we need not stand to prove it farther, than by confirming the particulars; and we shall content ourselves with what is here. In handling this truth, we shall, 1. Show what these attainments are. 2. Why the Lord gives them to such characters. 3. What is wanting of that which would preserve them from apostacy.

*First,* What these attainments are. We shall insist on the five steps which the apostle names here:

1. He may be "enlightened"—natural darkness and blindness in the things of God are removed. This saith, that he may have the means—and the worst of men have had the best of these, as the Jews, who had Christ's ministry, and that of his apostles—

and these means may have a good effect on him, in enlightening his mind in the knowledge of truth. And this effect that is here named, may extend so far, that he may have a literal knowledge of the word, and the truth thereof: of this there is no question. He may have a supernatural knowledge of many profound things in the word, by a special gift of knowledge or illumination, so that he may in this be above many of the truly godly, as to that sort of knowledge. It is likely that Judas knew more than the thief when he became penitent. And, indeed, there is nothing that a believer knoweth, but this apostate may know, though not in the same manner; and thus, the righteous who are ignorant, may be far inferior to those who come short of heaven. The measure of his knowledge may be great; even that of all things concerning God, his own heart, and the doctrines that are contained in the word. And the fruits of that illumination may be great. He may see such an excellency in Christ's church, as to join with it; and such danger in gross sin, that he may leave it; and attach such blamelessness to his walk, that no man can discern his rottenness.

2. He may "taste of the heavenly gift"—he may have a sort of faith, whereby Christ, and his grace and mercy may be tasted by him. This is a mighty attainment, whereof we spoke in the explication: but that we may draw the line the more accurately, we must now further handle the nature of this faith whereby he tastes. We say, then, that he hath an historical faith believing the truth of gospel tidings: this is a little tasting of justifying faith, for it is like it. He may meditate and contemplate on this truth; and this cannot be, without some savour of it and its

goodness. And he may apply these things to himself, as his portion, and far more must this be savoury to him. "He heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while:" for *a while* only he believeth.

3. Such believers are "partakers" of the more special (not *most* special) workings "of the Holy Ghost." There may be alarming convictions; but Felix, Herod, and Judas, wanted not these: to be awakened with a fright of hell, is no token of a godly man. Or there may be debasing discoveries of self, so that they have not been ashamed to confess their sin, to God's glory and their own shame: even Judas had this. Or external reformation flowing from fear of wrath, and that sensibly working on the heart, as in the case of Ahab. There may be within them a secret restraint on corruption, by the hand of God, not only by his providence (Genes. xx.), but by motions on the heart. There may be a spirit of zeal for a good cause when it is afoot in a particular season, as that of the Jewish multitudes, when they cried "Hosannah!" They may have great gifts, such as that of prayer, whereby they are able to speak to God in pertinent petitions as to words, with good appearance of tender affections, and great fervency; and also as of understanding the things of God, so of expressing them to the edification of others, in preaching and in conference. And they have some exercise of conscience in the discharge of these, not only as reflecting on the right season of doing, and of influence stirring them up to do them, but in looking on them when done; yea, and in finding difference as to assistance therein at one time and another: even Saul knew and lamented when God had departed from him.

4. And "taste the good word of God"—that is, they find its relish and sweetness. When they find it touching their condition, yea, when some of its discoveries of duty are made, they may relish them, as Herod, who heard John gladly, and did many things. Also, not only its suitableness, but its power may be felt, to the stirring up of delight and wonder, as in the case of many of Christ's hearers; and turning them to good resolutions and purposes. Its mysteries may delight them, (and what wonder?) so that the feet of its ministers may be "beautiful upon the mountains"; and its promises of pardon, and peace, and acceptance being thought to be theirs, may by them also be tasted and relished.

5. They may taste of the "powers of the world to come." Besides what is said of this in the explication, these may be added: he may fancy heaven and that blessedness to be his, and venture and lose much for them—he may in some good measure undervalue the earth in comparison of them. By the "powers of the world to come," we may understand its virtues and properties, both of which this man may taste. And of its virtues and effects—such as the making a man solicitous and careful about knowing how to get it (Luke xviii. 18), and painfulness in the means of obtaining it. This is one of its powers also. There is also joy in the thought of its being his, and the endurance of suffering, rather than forfeit this right, though not much nor long; and he may have a lower esteem of this world than he formerly had, and like Balaam, think little and joyfully of death, as a passage to heaven. And he may taste of its properties: its vast greatness may puzzle his understanding, and make him cry out, with David, "Oh, how great is thy good-

ness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm xxxi. 19). Its goodness and excellency may draw forth his affection of love and delight, and its being to come, his expectation and looking for it.—So much of the first thing, as to what great attainments a hypocrite may win to in godliness; not that every one attains so much, but the Lord gives them to some.

*Second.* Why doth the Lord grant so great things unto them that get no more?—a deep question! that might safely enough be answered with silence, or with the words of the householder, "May not I do what I will with mine own?" Yet may we offer at some wise reasons of this depth of Providence.

1. It is to declare His willingness to save, and to make it the more evident, that men's ruin is of themselves: for in this case is all done, that can be done, in the way of means; and more than is done to many, and more than he is bound to do for any. He brings them on a great way, to leave this on their consciences, and on the consciences of others, that he delights not in the death of sinners.

2. The Lord doth this to make his grace the more conspicuous—his special saving grace; conspicuous in its freedom, and in its power also. When two are carried an equal length in the preparation to a saving interest in God, the one is taken, and the other left.

3. That his own people may not stay, and sit down on any measure of attainments, but still may press on; so is he pleased, for this end, to communicate so much of his common grace to them that may backslide, that all may press forward for more.

*Third.* But you may say, "What is wanting to saving grace in all these things?—they seem to be greater attainments than many of the people of God win to." This leads to the question, "What is wanting of that which would preserve from apostacy?" I answer, Every thing here in the text hath somewhat wanting: As,

1. Their illumination: it wants still these: they never see themselves quite undone, and empty of all good, so as to loathe themselves, and be quite diffident of themselves, and to go out of themselves. Always there is somewhat that the unsound sinks into, and hath a good opinion of. And they never saw Christ, as the only enriching treasure for the man himself. Fine notions of Christ's accomplishments they may have in the general; but of his being all in all, and that he is suited fully to them, this they see not.

2. As to their faith, it is called temporary, because it lasts not; but this is not visible until defection; therefore we must search it farther out. Whatever faith a man may have of divine truth, and whatever application may be made of Christ to himself, he wants these things of a sound faith: 1. He wants the bottom and ground-work of saving faith, and that is, denial of self and all self-sufficiency. The guilt of sin on his conscience may stir him up to employ Christ in some way; but utter emptiness of all good in himself, as well as of safety from himself, never can, nor doth move him. 2. And therefore he fails in the very act of faith, which is, a receiving of Christ wholly, and resting in him, as he is made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, and offered to us, (1 Cor. i. 30). God hath exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour (Acts

v. 31), and as such he is to be received. 3. And lastly, he is a stranger unto the life of faith, or abiding in Christ, and drawing virtue from him, (John xv.; Gal. ii. 20). These are mysteries impracticable unto the man of highest common attainments. Now, all these three are knit together, and follow one on another. As to this, their shortcoming flows from this mistake;—they imagine they need Christ as a Saviour, and a giver of grace, and then, when they have got that which they think to be grace, they look on it as somewhat sufficient of itself, with their careful improvement of it, to advance the work of their salvation. Whereas the true believer seeth as much necessity of taking up his abode in the city of refuge, as of fleeing to it; and knows, that as his first new life flowed from his engrafting into Christ, the true stock, so his fruitfulness depends on the daily communication of his virtue.

3. As to their partaking of the Holy Ghost, here is a vast difference;—they know nothing of the regenerating sanctifying virtue of the Holy Ghost, which is the main benefit sinners receive by him. They want still the change of the heart and nature; they are still bad ground (verse 8), still "dogs," (2 Pet. ii. 22).

*Object.* But how shall I know, that there is such a change by the Holy Ghost on me, but by such things as you have ascribed to the common operations?—I answer, Better marks than any of these may every godly man find out of himself; As, 1. A single regard unto God's glory, which can never affect an unsanctified soul. To make it the man's chief aim, the attaining of it his chief joy; His dishonour his chief sorrow, are no where to be found but in a

sanctified soul. 2. And as to external reformation, those indications that are in the sound man, are in the heart, and from thence in the life, while the other man is still in an evil condition; and therefore, that reformation of the former, is more sound, and even, and universal. And it hath an aim also towards perfection; perfect holiness is lovely, to a holy sincere man. 3. As to gifts, the godly man, whatever share he hath or wants of these, hath what is far better than they are, and never wants such a measure of them as is simply needful. In prayer, for instance, though it may be he talks not so much nor so well as to words, as one of greater gifts, yet he still talks better—for his heart is more at the work, his aim is more honest, his reflections more spiritual, and his attainments more gracious and sanctifying.

4. Their tasting of the good word of God, whatever it hath in it, it wants much that the sound man hath. They taste not all in the word of God, for some things in it they are strangers unto; as, its enlivening power quickening them by it, and according to it, which David (Psalm cxix.) so often prays for. See also 1 Peter i. 23, where it is described as a living seed cast into their heart, raising them up unto a new life: this they know not. Its promises may quicken them to joy, but it never removes their natural death. Its feeding fructifying power also they know not of. They taste it only for trial, but do not feed on it. But a godly man finds this his bread, whereby his soul lives, and grows, and brings forth fruit unto God. It is the children's bread that children's nature only hath an appetite after. Some things of the word also they taste, that they do not relish and savour, as—its convincing power: when it

comes close to them, and that daily, to make new discoveries of their distemper, this they have no relish of. David takes it as a commendation of the word, that it warns him, (Psalm xix. 11, 12). The unsound man can take its conviction now and then in good part; but when it is full at the work of discovering sin, and comes close upon his practices, he cannot endure it. And the unspotted holiness and strictness of God's word, is no relishing thing to him, but he is ready inwardly to blame it, as being too strict; whereas the godly man will, like Paul (Rom. vii. 12), call the law good, even when he cannot fulfil it.

5. Though he may taste of the powers of the world to come, he wants what a godly man may have. For he wants the experience of the due meetness for it that every godly man in some measure possesses. He is ready, that is, willing, but not meet and prepared to receive it; and therefore you will find, that he may pray for it, and not make ready for it. It hath no such power on him, as to induce him to prefer it, as a spiritual happiness, above all things in the world; but still, there are some things he loves better—somewhat which he is more afraid of losing, than of this blessedness, as trials do discover: the cares of the world, or the persecution of it, draws him away. And the spiritual and true earnest of it is still unknown to him; and though it may, in some measure, be also unknown to a godly man, yet seeing the apostle speaks of such an attainment of the hypocrite, that the sincere themselves do not always obtain, we may well lay this against that, as a proof of its wanting that which it seems to have. The earnest of glory is all one with that of the Spirit. "In whom (Christ) also, after that ye believed, ye

were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—" Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (Ephes. i. 13, 14 ; 2 Cor. i. 22, and v. 5). These expressions may help us to guess at the thing. The earnest being of the nature with the principal sum, as well as a securing of it, and the Holy Ghost being its author, we may know that it must have these things to make it up,—some near degree of fellowship with God; some sensible advance in conformity to him ; and a holy delight and satisfaction resulting therefrom. Something like this, but a counterfeit, may the ungodly hypocrite have ; but it is attained this way,—he looks on heaven as a state of excellent happiness, by his historical faith ; his false spirit tells him it is his ; and his heart rejoices in the hopes of it, though he still remain a stranger unto holy, sanctifying fellowship with God. The unsound man, for all his tasting of its powers, is yet unacquainted with these virtues that the meanest of the godly partake of ; its main powers are not yet tasted. It takes not off his eye from sensible things, unto invisibles, (2 Cor. iv. 18). It puts not a bitterness into all his contentments, in comparison of it. A godly man is a stranger, and all his desirable mercies are but pilgrim's fare to him, that is often seasoned, and hath the bitter sauce of the remembrance where he is, and how far from home. It makes not all sufferings light, and tolerable, and small, in regard of it. (See Rom. viii. 18 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17) ; then joyful

(Matt. v. 12; Heb. x. 34). An unsound man may suffer for heaven, but he looks on this suffering as a great disadvantage, and is sorry that the way is not more easy; and therefore, when sufferings come to a height, he falls off. It makes the godly man count all the pains in labouring for it to be but small, and unworthy of it; but the unsound man thinks he may take pains enough, and possibly too much; and therefore he becomes a censurer of them that go beyond him in diligence, that they may make more ado than there is need.

USE 1.—Since it is thus that bare professors, in whom the root of the matter is not found, may go so far, then this speaks terror unto those that are short of them; and they are many: it says, "If you come short of them that have not true grace, you must be far more behind than they." For the enforcing and clearing of this subject, know, that many of those who go to hell, are not by much so near heaven, as others who yet shall be there also:—many sail to hell by the coast of heaven, still expecting to land safely, till the storm come, and drown them in perdition;—and that all these things in some measure all the godly have had, and many remarkably, ere the gracious change was felt or came on them. And therefore, though the having them will not prove you godly, yet the want of them will prove you to be ungodly.

Now, a slender reflection might suffice for conviction, that many want what is here. As for illumination—are there not many grossly ignorant, and who know not the letter of divine truth; and many who have that, have no more? A hypocrite may have great discoveries of the things of God, as we have already said. For faith—there are many that give

an ignorant implicit assent unto divine truth and the gospel, that never came unto a tasting of the sweetness of the gospel; they have never felt any relish of a Saviour. For the partaking of the Holy Ghost—many have no knowledge that there is a Holy Ghost, by any experience of his workings in awakening and convincing them. As for the taste of the word—many feel nothing in it of goodness and savour, nor of its pertinency to them, nor of its bitterness in reproving them. And as little power hath the world to come on them. If they can get thither when they die, they care not for any of its virtues. How terrible should this be to you, who are short of the attainments of those that yet may be in the gall of bitterness! The security of the age we live in, and the arrogancy of professors, call aloud to ministers to proclaim to them their hazard.

USE 2.—Be exhorted to take the warning in the scope of the apostle: go still forward in godliness, until you come the length that no hypocrite can attain; and this will be a work for you all your life long. For though the sincere though weak believer be quite above the reach of a bare profession, yet every sincere man hath these things, that will make his endeavours in advancing constant:—He is humble, and thinks little of his attainments, though never so great:—he is illuminated, and seeth both how small his attainments are, and how much is yet before him: hence, holy fear, and jealousy of himself and his treacherous heart, and so is he the more diligent—and he hath a love to progress, both from his single regard to God's commandment, and the love which the new creature within him hath toward further holiness.

If this fruit be reached in you, it is the design of the Holy Ghost in writing this, and mine in handling it: if not, I shall witness for God, that you were warned of the greatest danger that can befall you, and that you slighted it; so that when it overtakes you, you may justify God, and condemn yourselves. Oh! consider what a dreadful thought it will be in hell, to think, "A little more advancing would have removed me out of the way of this danger." Certainly none fall deeper into hell, than they that fall from the top of heaven's walls. He that hath given you what you have, is as ready to give you what you want, and more. A misery wilfully contracted must yours then be.

## SERMON II.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."—HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6.

WE have been speaking unto this truth, that mere professors may have great attainments. We shall now handle these—that professors of high attainments may fall away most sadly; and that there is a fall that is irretrievable; and what that is, shall be described further from the word.

Professors of the highest attainments in common grace, may fall away dreadfully: the apostle's supposition proves its possibility. The scripture gives us some instances. In the case of Saul, we find him,

according to the times, gifted with a spirit for government, walking for a while in God's way, and then he suddenly falls. Judas, an apostle, Christ's hearer and domestic servant, of whom, though we read nothing particularly to his advantage, yet, doubtless, many good things were with him, and his fellow-disciples never suspect him; and yet, at length he falls away. Herod may be reckoned amongst them, and Demas, and several apostates named in the word. Our own experience testifieth this, in that we have seen many, who when religion was in fashion and favour, did profess highly, pray often, reform many things, and walk blamelessly; who could talk of convictions, and awakenings, and joys, on some experience; and of the force of the word, and benefit of ordinances; yet many have turned profane, many corrupted in their principles—of whom, though it is like, the Lord hath his own whom he may still reclaim, yet, doubtless, many have justified this truth from their experience. For further confirmation of this, take and use in a good sense the world's wicked observation, "A young saint an old devil." Though it is likely the devil did teach men this, to frighten them from religion in their young days, which are the fittest season of setting about it, yet experience shows, that none are more wicked when of age, than such as have been under convictions unprofitable when young. The world's censure of professors, that they are worse in many things to deal with than other folks, though there be much of prejudice and partiality in it, yet some truth it has as to many. Observe also, that men when awakened by sickness or danger, and who sleep again, go on more seriously and boldly in sin, than ever they did; and are farther out of the reach of a

conviction, than any, or than themselves formerly were.

We shall adduce further evidence from scripture to confirm this truth.

1. The truly godly themselves who have saving grace, may fall back in a great measure—and much more they. The instances of such are various; some by a sudden fit of temptation being drawn on unto great sin, and quickly recovering, as Peter; some lying longer under its power, as David, whose decay seems to have been very great, and for many days. And the force of the reason is strong; for common operations are nowise so powerful to restrain corruption and prevent apostacy, as the truth of God's grace in the heart.

2. Men under the highest of common operations may fall utterly away, because what they have, are not sufficient preservatives and antidotes against defection. Thus, mere illumination cannot preserve; because a man, as long as he is unrenewed, may walk contrary to his light, and even then too much. His tasting of faith cannot preserve; because though somewhat of Christ's sweetness be tasted by him, yet there is in Christ what he distastes, and thus he prepares his way to apostacy. His partaking of the Holy Ghost, ordinary or extraordinary, is no bar to hold out defection; for it is no sanctifying participation, and so, is no more than a certain qualification for some works naturally good. His tasting of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come are not sufficient neither; for they are but *tastings*, and not a feeding thereupon, which alone yields strength unto a man to keep him from falling.

In general, all these are such things as he hath, or such things as he tastes. Two things he hath,—illumination, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; such may be taken from him; and even when they are present with him, they cannot preserve him from apostacy. The things that he hath a taste of are excellent—faith, the word, and works:—but this is the want—that he hath a taste, and no more. And so this bewrayeth either the unsoundness of his aim and intention, that he meddles only with Christ, and the word, and heaven, to get a taste and trial of them, and no more; or the unsoundness of his temper, that he can endure no more but a taste of these things: and certainly it tells their unprofitableness to him. Christ is ordained to be lived on, and by faith (Gal. ii. 20), and only so far *tasted* in the beginning, as to encourage to follow on to know him, and to be built up on him (1 Pet. ii. 3, 4), to be dwelt in (John xv.), to have him dwelling in the heart (Ephes. iii. 17). The word is to be fed upon by beginners as milk (Heb. v. 12, 13; 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2). Children must live by tasting of the milk, as grown men on it as food proper for them. Man liveth not by bread, but by the word; heaven is not to be tasted, but dwelt in (Philip. iii. 20). It is to be the mark a Christian shoots at. And therefore as to all these things that he tastes of, he wants the due virtue, and influence, and power. Yea, there is also the inconstancy of these things: he may lose the relish of them; yea, the very tastings may be taken away, and so, any little effect that tasting might have, is also removed. And this may come to pass, partly by the corrupt temper of his heart; partly, by the Lord's judgment taking away the opportunities of tasting from him,

that hath no mind to feed on this fare. Again, this may betray his weakness, that it prevails not against the sinful savour of other things. This tasting then bewraying, as is said, the unsoundness of the heart; and the short-livedness of these things, saith, that the benefit of them cannot be reaped by him, while he is such; and what benefit is reaped, is not enough to preserve him from decaying.

The third reason of this truth is, that such want the necessary and only sufficient preservatives against defection. As, 1. He wants the new nature: all he has amounts not to innovation and a new creature; and it is evident at the very reading of these words, unto any acquainted with the style and phrase of the Holy Ghost, that it is his design here to speak only of common attainments. Now, that the new nature is an excellent preservative against defection, is evident. This new nature, in a native way and principle which is the strongest and most lasting, produceth love to God from whom it had its being; to his truth and word, the instrument of its being, and means of its nourishment and growth; and also, it hath as native, a loathing of any departure from God and his way, though darkness and delusion in a particular may prevail.

2. They want true faith, a special mean of preventing apostacy (see Heb. iii. 12; and x. 38, 39), and that it is not with them, we showed already. That it is useful to prevent apostacy, is many ways demonstrable: 1. Because it is the mean on our part of our union with Jesus Christ, the fountain of our strength; and so, the way to get communications of grace needful from him, is to exercise this grace on him. 2. It is the main shield we have to oppose to

the temptations of Satan (Ephes. vi. 16), and of the world (1 John v. 4). So Moses found it, (Heb. xi. 26–29).

3. They want an interest in God's favour and friendship, and so, want that care, and kindness, and watching over them for good, that his people meet with. The waterings and refreshings, preventing mercies, surprisals of mercy, and wise turning-about of begun falling. to the advancing of future stedfastness, which the Lord gives to his people, and whereby he prevents utter apostacy, they are strangers to.

4. The Holy Ghost's sanctifying abode in their hearts they want, which is the great preservative of the people of God. (See 1 John ii. 27). They have a sort of qualifying abode for the material part of duty, but no more.

These may serve for the clearing and confirming of the truth of this, that common grace is no preservative against defection. In farther prosecution of this purpose concerning the possibility of the fall of men of highest attainments in common things, I shall, 1. Distinguish the sorts of falling away and apostacy; 2. Show how they are carried on and advanced; 3. Show what is their danger.

1. What sorts of falling away professors are in danger of. The general distinction is—an apostacy may either be in principles or profession, or else in practice; and that both of them may be damnable, we shall hear anon. An apostacy from the profession of Christian religion is threefold—through ignorance, when many that have not come to any sound understanding of their profession, forsake it; such were the carnal Jews (John vi. 66)—an apostacy from the profession through infirmity and carnal fear, as Peter's

was; although it is dreadful, when their profession is cloaked and covered for a while for some base ends—and an apostacy from the profession through resolute wickedness; and this may be sometimes with a check, and sometimes without it. The first of these belongs not to us. An apostacy in practice, is that decay and falling from the practice of those duties, that the profession retained obligeth unto; and this is total or partial: partial, as in the case of the godly, who often fall into it; total, as in that of hypocrites only, who may return just to the same state from which their common workings brought them, (2 Pet. ii. 19, 20). Only. I would have you to regard these things about this distinction of apostacies; to wit, that where there is a great measure of any one, there is no want of a measure of the other—that if they were separable, apostacy from the profession is the worst, because most to God's dishonour, though the other also be dishonourable and destructive—that a great degree of either is damning—and they are so linked together, that in the full handling of one, we must speak of the other, for principles of profession have an influence on practice, and bad practice has an influence to darken the judgment.

2. The next thing promised to be handled is, How such apostacies are carried on. And this question is useful for convicting those who are under them; for preparing us all against them, and Satan's devices and our own heart's treachery in the matter—and for instructing us both in repentance and reformation—for the method of sin's advancing, instructs in the method of reformation and repentance.

As to the apostacy of ignorance it concerns not us, for we speak of that of illuminated professors.

As to the other, though we have distinguished them, yet now, shall we offer to give a thread of the scope downward again, premising only these things, 1. That the depth of the sovereignty of Satan's cunning and the heart's treachery, renders it impossible to search out this mystery of iniquity unto the bottom. 2. As it is the design of the Spirit of God in his common operations, to draw men unto that pitch of attainment and happiness from which there is no falling, so is it Satan's, in tempting, to pull men into irrecoverable misery. 3. As men's wickedness often mars the success attainable by the improvement of the Holy Ghost's workings, so the Lord's goodness, sometimes special, sometimes common, stops the career into inevitable apostacies; and therefore, often where saving grace is not, yet the depth of apostacy is prevented, sometimes by restraint on temptations, and sometimes by a restraint on the corruptions in men.

Now, to offer some light upon these black stairs to the pit, we are to remember how far the man is gone upward as is said. 1. His first preparative to backsliding is standing still. He thinks he is so well advanced, that he is now shot-free: now he hath got what will save him; and he looks down upon those below him, with a sort of loftiness and disdain. 2. Then come heart-quarrels against further advancement. As the pride of his heart appears in the former case, so does its unrenewedness and want of sanctification in this. Wanting the new nature that kindly inclines unto progress, he thinks that further progress is needless, or may be troublesome and prejudicial unto his carnal interests, the love whereof is not rooted out. 3. Satan and his heart do now pro-

pose unto him his idol, some one corruption or other, that in the former advancing was, it may be, for a while put to the door: now is it presented, and entertained, it is likely, more secretly, but as warmly as ever. It hath the throne, although it gives not forth such open laws as formerly. 4. Then may his light and this reinstatement struggle awhile together, and with an issue of this sort—that either his light is displeasing, for its crossing him in his enjoyment, or that idol may now and then be a little discountenanced, though never hated, according to the clearness of his light and convictions, as they ebb or flow. 5. While it is thus with him in this carnal warfare, possibly a trial may come, wherein resolvedly he must take part with his light or his sin; for the former may be in his ordinary practice, the latter in his way wherein he must walk, and that with choice and deliberation. And here a hotter and sorer combat must be, and we suppose, without a powerful restraint, he now makes a bad choice, and resolvedly crosseth his light, for satisfying of his carnal aim and scope. 6. When he is arrived at this, that he walks in a way that is not good, with a deliberate purpose, and hath left the way of God in profession or practice, then is it possible that he may arrive at a positive and avowed resolute dislike of that way and truth that formerly he walked in, and which was so prejudicial to his lusts. And the more there remains in him of the light of that truth, then more hotly doth the fire of enmity in his heart break forth. This is a considerable step, and far downward, and near the pit. But this is not all. 7. He comes now to a hatred and dislike of Jesus Christ himself, whose truth he once knew and professed.

He thinks him a hard master, now when he hath left him; that his laws are more intolerable and grievous, and his promises unworthy, and insufficient to balance his designs of seeking happiness. 8. And then he comes to hate those pains and workings on his heart, whereby any savour on his heart at any time was wrought of this way, and his offered and once pretended guide. 9. And lastly, His enmity against the worker, the Holy Ghost, may break out, and that the more, that in all this backsliding of his, he hath met with the more warnings, stops, and terrors, in his course.

Another way to guess at the method of such apostacies, shall be from the words themselves, wherein we have five steps of advancement, and so the apostacy must be from all; and we must begin at the top of this ladder.

1. His tasting the powers of the world to come is fallen from, it may be from carelessness, and the bewitching relish of other things, (see Matt. xiii. 22); and this chokes his further growth. Heaven, the end and scope of all godliness, grows an unsavoury thing with him, for he never had a spiritual savour of it; and this little taste may be put away by his savouring the things of the earth. 2. His savouring of God's word decays also naturally, because of the former. He that hath lost his relish of heaven, what taste can God's good word have unto him? 3. He then comes to lose his partakings of the Holy Ghost: gifts decay either through his carelessness, or justly are taken away. 4. His sort of faith decays with it: Christ becomes unsavoury also. He hath now no relish of a Saviour; the tidings of him are tasteless and disgusting. 5. And lastly, he falls from his light

and knowledge also, either by struggling with it, and the Lord's withdrawing thereof, or by his wilfully putting it out—which is a sin possible for a man left of God, and given up to Satan to do.

3. What is the danger of apostacy? 1. This is one of its great dangers, that every declining is restless, and tends unto a growth. No man can stand still in this course, unless he is kept by restraining, or brought back by saving grace. 2. Because recoveries are very rare, even from apostacies that are not simply incurable. There is so much provocation in them, that the Lord ordinarily recovers not so many plagues of heart; and these so strongly are contracted, that rarely they are recovered from. 3. And because there is a step in apostacy that is incurable, that is the danger which the Spirit of God here propoundeth. And therefore here we shall both show its nature and its irrecoverableness, and how it is reasonable that it should be so.

For its nature—there is considerable difficulty here; yet shall we endeavour to walk as warily as we can, to shun inconveniences on both hands. The word gives us no definition; but it gives us the names of this sin. It is a "sin against the Holy Ghost," that is, against him in his workings, and as working is the object of this, if we may so speak, (Matt. xii. 31). He that speaks a word against the Son of Man, having no conviction of his godhead and office, it shall upon repentance be forgiven; but not so this sin, which is against the Holy Ghost's workings: he hath "done despite unto the Spirit of grace," (Heb. x. 29). It is also a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and relates to the case where the Pharisees, convinced in their consciences by the Holy Ghost of the appearance

of God in Christ's mighty works, did yet call him a devil; not that it stands simply in words, but only as the blaspheming words proceed from the heart, as in that instance they did. And it is an apostacy that is utter and total: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," (Heb. x. 26, 27). And it is a "sin unto death" (1 John v. 16), and unpardonable; that is, such as never shall be forgiven. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men," (Matt. xii. 31). There is no repentance for such as commit it, (Heb. vi. 6); nothing is left to them, but an expectation of vengeance.

The scriptures as they name the sin, so they specify the persons that commit it. They are professors; it is not the sin of heathens: they have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith *they were sanctified*, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace," (Heb. x. 29). And they have knowledge, illumination, and other gifts, as this, and the other places we have cited do all prove. It is then a sin to be found in professors of the highest stamp.

The scriptures tell us what the committers of this sin do. They blaspheme against their conscience and knowledge (Matt. xii. 31); they crucify Christ afresh, call him a deceiver, and approve of the Jews crucifying him. On that account they "put him to open shame;" they openly renounce his name, and give the world to know that they have tried him, and find

nothing in him worthy to be adhered unto. But Hebrews x. 29, is a further and clearer explication of this. They "tread under foot the Son of God;" that is, openly and basely despise him—"count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy," common "thing;" that is, reckon Christ's blood sealing the covenant, wherein once they were externally, and so, federally holy, no more than common blood, nay, not so much—and "do despite unto the Spirit of grace;" despitefully reject the Holy Ghost, who was at labour formerly with their hearts, to convert and sanctify them, and work grace in them.

This much might satisfy, but we shall now briefly deduce some conclusions from the foregoing, without offering any peremptory definition from them.

1. This sin, then, is against Christ as a Saviour, and in his office of Redeemer, and that, witnessed unto by the Holy Ghost in the sinner's conscience; and so, it is called both a sin against Christ and the Holy Ghost in different respects, but the latter more properly; or both thus conjunctly—it is against Christ evidenced to the conscience by the Holy Ghost to be the Redeemer of the world; or against the Holy Ghost witnessing this to the conscience. 2. This sin is an act of the highest contempt, and despite, and wilful rejecting; and such it must be where the evidence is so pressing.

How can this sin be committed? As it is thus defined, many question its possibility, and that, because of these circumstances: It is a sin above that of the devils, who are greater and older sinners than men: it is such an avowed rushing on eternal misery, when man's reason and self-love should struggle against it;—and there is no temptation to it. In

answer to these objections, we shall give some general reasons to obviate them, and prove the possibility of committing it; explain scripture instances; and give a more particular reply. In general, we give for answer, that the heart's wickedness is an unsearchable depth, and our reason will soon be aground in searching it; nor can it well be told what may be produced of such a creature as man is, when these things concur—total desertion on the part of God; the being utterly left unto Satan's temptations; and the irritating power of spiritual challenges and convictions. As for the scripture instances, we need only allude here to that of the Pharisees, who knew that Christ was led by the Spirit of God, and yet they fell into this blasphemy. But to answer particularly, it is no absurdity to say that there are some aggravations in the sin of men, which are not in that of devils; as all gospel sins, which flow not so much entirely from sinful nature in itself considered, as from it when suitable circumstances draw it out. As for the rushing on eternal misery which it implies, it is a question, if they always know this, when they commit it: belike the Pharisees themselves knew not all their danger. In ordinary sins against knowledge, somewhat of this madness is found, and there is no wonder if it should be found in this. Their stupidity of conscience is come to that height, that it is no wonder they run on. As for the want of temptations to commit this crime; if by a temptation you mean an offer of advantage, that should take with a reasonable man, it is true, there is none here as in other cases. But if we take temptation so largely, as to comprehend Satan's diligence in stirring up, the heart's inclination to yield, some fancied satisfaction

to move, then, the sinner against the Holy Ghost sins not without a temptation. His fancied advantages may be many, as was the case with the Pharisees, and as it is with the worst of apostates at all times; yet in such high acts of raging madness against God, man acts rather like a devil, than a reasonable creature.

We are now to show the unpardonableness of this sin, and the reasonableness that it should be so. And though it might be enough to satisfy us that God saith it, yet we may consider its reasonableness, which will appear from a consideration of these points; 1. This is the highest affront unto the Son of God who hath undertaken our redemption. To neglect his salvation through carelessness, is damning (Heb. ii. 3); to contend with Him and his offers in pursuit of our lusts, is yet worse; to stand out against him to the last breath in the madness of rebellion, is terrible. But after some acquaintance and professed subjection, deliberately to pour out contempt on his sacrifice of atonement, and thus give the defiance to God, is intolerable. 2. This is the highest and utmost opposition unto such operations of the Holy Ghost, as may be saving, and that, after the clearest and most convincing evidences that can be given. 3. This is the highest ripeness of sin; this is sin in its own proper colours; thus the man who commits it, is like the devil, or like one in hell. 4. It is the full ripeness of spiritual plagues that do highly indispose unto all returning. Hardness of heart is great and ripe, like the devil's; conscience is stupid, or filled with hopeless fear, and that indeed no pleasure to the man, and yet not heavily his burden.

Because we cannot now enter on the further hand-

ling and applying of this terrible purpose, I shall now only draw these inferences from what is said.

1. Then there is no ground for Satan's disquieting of any with their having committed this sin, who are displeased with any thing they have done in opposition to Christ and his Spirit; who have any honest longings to be at peace with God in him; who find any longings of love and liking towards him; and who can entreat the Holy Ghost to work yet more within their hearts.

2. We see then that there is great reason to beware of any thing that leads towards this dreadful sin, that it may be escaped; such as long continuance under the offers of the gospel, without making up a hearty peace, and closing with Christ, which is our security against this sin; and sins against knowledge and conscience, even against the law. These are sad preparatives, and lead on to this sin against the Holy Ghost.

3. Walking in the way and course that is not good. This is more than the former, for this is deliberate and resolved; whereas the violence of a temptation by a surprise may draw Peter and David into the other.

4. Beware of the pardonable sins against the Holy Ghost, if you would escape that which is unpardonable. These are four in scripture terms, which I shall only apply unto our present purpose:

1st, Resisting the saving assaults of the Holy Ghost, (Acts vii. 51), a dreadful sin! which yet all in some measure are guilty of, who yield not their hearts at the first calls of the gospel; and indeed, the unpardonable sin itself, is a high degree of this.

2d, Quenching of the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19), which

whatever be in it as it stands in that chapter, this is in it as to our purposes—when awakening, heart-warning, sin-consuming operations are quenched; when men cast water thereupon, as if they were in hazard of being burnt up thereby.

3. Grieving of the Holy Ghost (Ephes. iv. 30), which though it be a sin, as the former, that the godly may and often do fall into, yet we rather apply it in this sense to the ungodly; and thus it is, when the Spirit of God is at work, and is in some joyful hopeful temper of having gained somewhat on the heart, the man immediately provokes and proves all to be lost labour.

4. Vexing of the Spirit of God, (Isa. lxiii. 10). That is the sin of rebellion, and it hints, as it were, the Spirit of the Lord being put to irresolution and vexation how to guide and gain them, when one mean after another is used, and all in vain: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," (Hos. vi. 4). Love is tried, and that prevails not; terror, and that works not, (See Matt. xi. 16). None of his dealings please them; but as it was with Israel, they find fault with every thing.

We have thus been handling as dreadful truths as are to be found in the word—that men of unsound hearts may attain to great things in godliness, or in the appearances of it; and that hypocrites of the highest attainments may fearfully fall. But it may be said, "This is the way to dishearten us in religion to tell us such things." I answer, If God do not tell you them, do not believe us. Besides, there is not the least discouragement in all this, but rather

matter of humility, and searching, and awakening, and therefore do we use it. Its design is not to discourage, and it is abused if this be felt. And what hazard, say you, are you in of apostacy like this in the text? You are in hazard of heart-declinings, which may be damning. You know not what temptations you may be exposed unto, of renouncing the truth of the gospel; and the prevailing of such temptations may accomplish all the misery spoken of here. May apostates go far forward to heaven? Then search yourselves, and see how far you go beyond them.

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